



"Morgan Sommerville"  
<msommerville@appalachian  
trail.org>

08/26/2011 06:59 PM

To <grsmcomments@nps.gov>, <Clayton\_Jordan@nps.gov>,  
<Melissa\_Cobern@nps.gov>

cc "Philip Royer" <phillip.royer@asgarch.com>,  
<wavh@email.dnet.net>, <EdwrdFlm@aol.com>, "Dave  
Startzell" <dstartzell@appalachiantrail.org>, "Laura

bcc

Subject GRSM Backcountry Office & Permit System Restructuring  
Proposal

October 26, 2011

Clayton Jordan, Chief Ranger  
Great Smoky Mountains National Park  
107 Park Headquarters Drive  
Gatlinburg, TN 37738

Dear Ranger Jordan:

I have been collecting comments from throughout the Appalachian Trail Conservancy's (ATC) southern Regional Partnership Committee (RPC), Stewardship Council (SC) members, ATC members and ATC and NPS A.T. Park Office Staff regarding the GRSM's **Backcountry Office & Permit System Restructuring Proposal**. Initially there appeared to be a consensus, but as I have received more comments that apparent consensus has become less obvious.

Our normal way of dealing with significant issues such as this proposal is to talk them over at our RPC and SC meetings which allow thorough and thoughtful discussion, leading to a well considered outcome. We hope and presume that GRSM staff would be involved in those discussions. Today's deadline for comment on this proposal has allowed only limited opportunity for discussion; mainly just initial reporting of comments.

There has been considerable interest within the A.T. community regarding this proposal, with particular concerns about how to appropriately accommodate the vagaries of thru-hiker schedules and their difficulty with access to the internet once on the A.T., and shelter/campsite capacity in the Smokies during the peak A.T. thru-hiker season. Cell service is very spotty along the A.T.'s southern reaches as a good portion of the A.T. south of the Smokies runs through designated Wilderness or is in otherwise remote areas. I do not know what proportion of A.T. hikers may carry a smart phone allowing internet access, should they be able to find cell service.

Additionally, there is currently only one site along the A.T. at which A.T. hikers *must* stay which requires payment of a fee. All other fee areas along the A.T. may be legally by-passed with alternatives of some sort. The current GRSM **Backcountry Office & Permit System Restructuring Proposal** does not allow an A.T. hiker a non-fee alternative if they wish to hike the A.T. through the Smokies. This type of potentially significant change in the A.T. experience should be preceded by a careful discussion relative to any impacts to the intended A.T. experience and potential precedent this policy may set, which your deadline does not allow.

Finally, we also see this GRSM proposal as having significant potential to improve the delivery of, and most importantly, the use of *Leave No Trace* principles by A.T. hikers (and riders) in the Smokies. We would like to have the time to discuss that with GRSM staff to see if this proposal has win/win potential regarding LNT.

For those reasons, I am not at this time providing specific comments regarding the GRSM **Backcountry Office & Permit System Restructuring Proposal** and again request that the GRSM work with the ATC's committee structure and timetable to develop acceptable A.T. related solutions to the issues raised in this proposal. With any luck, we may have the results of such a discussion at some point in November,

following our October RPC and SC meetings and Board of Directors meeting.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input to this proposal and for your continued interest in the appropriate stewardship of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail.

Morgan Sommerville  
Regional Director  
Appalachian Trail Conservancy  
160A Zillicoa Street  
Asheville, NC 28801  
Phone: 828.254.3708 x12  
Mobile: 828.551.4873  
Fax: 828.254.3754  
[msommerville@appalachiantrail.org](mailto:msommerville@appalachiantrail.org)  
[www.appalachiantrail.org](http://www.appalachiantrail.org)



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CONSERVANCY

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The Appalachian Trail Conservancy's mission is to preserve and manage the Appalachian Trail – ensuring that its vast natural beauty and priceless cultural heritage can be shared and enjoyed today, tomorrow, and for centuries to come. To become a member, volunteer, or learn more, visit [www.appalachiantrail.org](http://www.appalachiantrail.org).

jcmkdeweese@aol.com

08/28/2011 12:50 PM

To grsmcomments@nps.gov

cc

bcc

Subject Comments, Proposed backcountry management changes



I would like to add my comments and suggestions regarding backcountry management changes.

I would like to begin by relaying a personal experience related to this topic. I annually visit one of the reserved campsites in the back country. Last year, I was unable to get through to the reservations office. I made 10 attempts in a 20 day period. I proceeded with my trip after getting the necessary permit and writing "unable to contact office" in the reservation block of the permit. My friend and I arrived at the site and set up that afternoon. Later, that day, a group of 8 campers came in and asked us to leave since they had the site reserved. We were unable to convince them that the site would hold up to 15 campers because the permit states "maximum party size is 8 campers". After an hour long heated discussion, we decided to break camp and move to an unreserved site. This could have all been avoided with a more efficient registration process.

I am opposed to fee permitting for these sites simply because I think it can handled more efficiently. Here's what I suggest. Create a website link on the GRSM website leading to a backcountry reservation site. This will show how many spots are vacant in each site and allow one to make reservations without staff help. There will also be a simple process that will allow one to cancel reservations. The website should also clearly state all backcountry rules and frequently asked questions regarding backcountry use so that the reservation office would not continue to have to answer repeated questions. Only the staff will have access to the campers' personal information from the registration forms. The Backcountry Reservations Office will continue to be used to assist those that are unwilling or unable to access or use online services. The website link should bring the office workload to a manageable state.

Rules enforcement will be the responsibility of part-time rangers who are paid through funds received from violations fines. There should also be modest fines imposed for those who make reservations and fail

to cancel them, which prevents others from using the site. A printed list, carried with an enforcement ranger would easily show who should be at which site and on which dates. Well publicized notification of new policies and enforcement begin dates would be effective in setting the tone for these changes.

I spend about 15 days each year in the backcountry and have done this for 20+ years.. I welcome changes to the free-for-all that currently exists, but, again, I disagree that a fee system is necessary at this time. I will be glad to answer any questions or elaborate on my suggestions. I appreciate the opportunity to provide input on this subject.

Jerry DeWeese  
(828) 284-4979



N



rec'd  
8.29.11

## We Welcome Your Comments

The National Park Service preserves the extraordinary natural and cultural resources of Great Smoky Mountains National Park for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. The staff and volunteers of Great Smoky Mountains National Park are committed to providing park visitors with excellent service. We value your comments and suggestions. Please let us know how we can make your visit safe and enjoyable.

As someone who lives and works in the Backcountry (LeConte lodge) this Fee system is a great idea we need more rangers in the Backcountry (David Worth!) I am so tired of people staying in shelters w/ Fires. Too many people not enough tickets please, please please my only complaint it is you won't charge enough.

Thank you for your interest in  
Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

Name

Address

Daytime Phone

Chris Varden  
250 Apple Valley rd  
Sevierville TN 37862  
865-599-3202

### FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

Name and location of person receiving comment. \_\_\_\_\_

Date and time of incident (a.m. or p.m.) \_\_\_\_\_

Action taken by worker receiving comment: (I advised the visitor that..., I solved the problem by...) \_\_\_\_\_

Route to Employee's Supervisor  
Division Chief  
Superintendent

Great Smoky Mountains National Park  
107 Park Headquarters Road  
Gatlinburg, TN 37738

EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA



"Jane Sharpe" <jane.sharpe@asgarch.com>  
08/29/2011 03:07 PM

To <grsmcomments@nps.gov>

cc

bcc

Subject Back Country Camping

Dear Sirs,

I recently heard about the possible imposing of fees for back country camping in the Smoky Mountains. It sure would be a shame to see that happen. I believe it might keep some people from being able to participate in that experience. Many back country campers are outdoor enthusiasts who don't need that added expense in this economy and this could also cause financial as well as scheduling problems for those who are hiking the AT.

If the motive is to generate revenue, will this really bring that much income for the Park? Surely there are other ways to bring in funds. What about charging those who ride horses in the Park. They cause damage on the trails and many times leave a mess at campsites. (Due to the fact they are able to carry more for their camping experience).

I hope that you will reconsider the need for this proposed fee and come to the conclusion that it is not necessary. Thanks for your consideration.

Jane Sharpe

[jolly1027@charter.net](mailto:jolly1027@charter.net)



"Massie, Tom" <tom.massie@ncdenr.gov>  
08/31/2011 12:44 PM

To "grsmcomments@nps.gov" <grsmcomments@nps.gov>

cc

bcc

Subject Backcountry reservations and fee proposal

I am opposed to the proposed changes to the backcountry camping structure within GSMNP. The current system has worked well since the parks inception. The current system is easy, convenient and free. Problems associated with current system are overblown in my opinion, but it is a great way to increase revenues. The only regional newspaper in WNC has editorialized its opposition to this proposal as have several other local papers.

The proposal has some positive attributes associated with it including more easily accessible backcountry information for individuals unfamiliar with the sites available. However, many backcountry sites are underutilized and there appears to be little if any need for reservations. Overall backcountry camping is down from historic highs. The proposed fee structures being considered will further reduce backcountry camping in my opinion. It will cause a financial hardship on many local users, especially during periods of economic slowdowns, like now. A similar proposal was considered by GSMNP 10-15 years ago during another time of extreme fiscal pressure on the park budget. I opposed that proposal for many of these same reasons.

I have used Recreation.gov before and this private contractor has policies which can penalize users for cancellation of reservations and simply adds to the cost, we the users, have to pay. Perhaps other alternatives exist which provide a better service for GSMNP.

Protection of natural resources is the responsibility of the NPS as defined through the "Organic Act" which established the mission of the NPS. Protection of the Park's natural resources historically have come from the base NPS budget. This proposal would shift that financial responsibility to campers through user fees. Park management has consciously made the decision to shift limited resources from backcountry protection to the front country over the past two decades. I can remember when GSMNP had 8 backcountry rangers, today we have none. Two backcountry rangers for a 500,000 acre National Park will still be woefully insufficient to address many of the concerns cited. So, what would be the real benefit and why should I pay for it? While park management can rationalize that this proposal is not a money maker, it will allow the Park to expand its ranger staff by at least two persons. Consequently, it is a money maker.

While I am opposed to the current proposal, I do understand the needs and justifications. Perhaps some other alternatives could be developed which would be more acceptable to the local populace. Has any consideration been given to an annual fee for residents of NC and TN (like a Golden Age Pass) to reduce the economic hardship? How will the shelters along the AT be treated for thru hikers? Why not consider just fees for the number of reserved campsites already designated within the park? These sites are in the most demand and most of the problems cited

within the proposal apply to these most heavily used locations. Surely, the revenues generated from these sites would be sufficient to staff the backcountry office full time. Perhaps the "Friends" could seek support for staffing of the reservation office from local outdoor shops and outfitters?

Time to rethink this proposal.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Tom L. Massie  
87 Cliffside Dr.  
Sylva, NC 28779



ruffin shackelford <ruffinomc@gmail.com>  
09/20/2011 08:07 AM

To GrsmComments@nps.gov

cc

bcc

Subject Back Country Permit Fees

My wife and I are Directors of Outdoor Mission Camp, a ministry of Youth for Christ located in Maggie Valley, NC. Over the last two years, we have taken numerous "campers" into the back country of the park to enjoy it's majesty and serenity. Proposed fees for back country camping would dramatically effect our ability to continue to share with others this national resource. Please read the attached letter to the Superintendent. I welcome any and all questions or comments to our concern.

Thank you,

Ruffin Shackelford

--  
Ruffin Shackelford  
Outdoor Mission Camp  
2514 Fie Top Rd  
Maggie Valley, NC 28751



828-926-3253 Back Country Fees.doc



September 19, 2011

Dear Superintendent,

I appreciate the opportunity to address the issue of proposed fees associated with use of back country campsites within the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

Through the cooperation of Bob Wightman in the Gatlinburg office, and the Special Use Permit program maintained by the GSMNP, Outdoor Mission Camp, a ministry of Youth for Christ, has spent many wonderful months in the Smokies sharing the beauty of our local national park with kids and adults from many areas of the US. OMC borders the Cataloochee Ranch on the GSMNP's eastern edge. We often utilize the back country camp sites seeking solitude within the creation. The Smokies have proven to be a wonderful classroom, Lab, lunch room, and sanctuary for children who come to camp to marvel at the beauty of these mountains, and who, in so doing, discover a connection between themselves and their Creator.

Our ministry works often with minority students who have never been outside of their home town or the concrete walls of their particular project. They may have heard of these mountains, but many have never seen them much less spent the night in the solitude of deep forests. Back packing trips are often full of challenges and new experiences for these kids yet they are consistently the most meaningful and memorable times spent at OMC. People who have never heard about the Smoky Mountains go home inspired to preserve and care for them. Kids at Risk fall in love with mountains and return year after year to enjoy a connection forged deep within the hollows and valleys of the GSMNP.

Having made reservations for back country camp sites over the years, I have spoken to many volunteers who have helped us in the current reservation process. And I agree that there are too few back country rangers within the park itself. Yet, to begin charging fees for use of the back country is to place more hurdles in the path of those who desire to experience the treasure that is the GSMNP. To care for the park in the years to come, today's youth must experience the nature of the Smokies. One day we will entrust the care of these mountains to these same kids. Please do not limit use of back country camp sites to only those who can afford the privilege.

Ruffin Shackelford  
Director, Outdoor Mission Camp / YFCR  
Maggie Valley, NC

Bob Miller/GRSM/NPS  
09/21/2011 10:59 AM

To GRSMComments@NPS

cc

bcc

Subject Fw: From NPS.gov: backcountry fees

Bob Miller  
Management Assistant  
Great Smoky Mountains National Park  
(865) 436-1207  
FAX 436-1204

--- Forwarded by Bob Miller/GRSM/NPS on 09/21/2011 10:58 AM ---

kendwalker@charter.net

08/18/2011 09:25 AM



To Bob\_Miller@nps.gov

cc

Subject From NPS.gov: backcountry fees

Email submitted from: kendwalker@charter.net at /grsm/parknews/contactpublicaffairs.htm

Mailing Address  
Kenneth Walker  
209 W Crawford Ave  
Monterey, TN 38574  
USA

When this takes affect it will be a big loss for the park and the hikers like me, i'm 70 years old, been hiking the Smokies 25+ years. I donate, have friends of the smokies plates, pick up trash while hiking. My kind of hiker is going to find other places to hike. I know this is a waste of my time sending this email but doing it anyhow.



Dean Ratzlaff <deanratzlaff@hotmail.com>  
09/30/2011 09:38 PM

To <grsmcomments@nps.gov>

cc

bcc

Subject Backcountry Office & Permit System Restructuring Proposal

Recently my buddies and I drove down to the Smokies from the Louisville are for our annual hiking trip, where we learned about the proposal.

The reservation system is challenging- it's difficult to obtain a permit, and there's still no guarantee that when you get to the campsite somebody without a permit won't already be there. I trust that contracting with Recreation.gov will improve the ease of obtaining permits. Not having contacted them, I cannot personally evaluate their service but if the US Dept of Interior and Forest Service use the service I feel comfortable assuming they will do a good job.

Reservation systems are contingent upon enforcement, and that seems to me to present a challenge. A strict approach, such as an armed officer(s) escorting a party off the mountain and out of the park, no matter if it is in the black of night, is not unreasonable. The proposal dated July 27, 2011 mentions "increased ranger presence in the backcountry" but does not provide more specifics. If enforcement of the reservation system for the benefit of those who properly use it is the goal, I would like to see more specific information, such as the following:

2 full-time backcountry rangers who bear responsibility for escorting reservation violators off the trails. To enable their enforcement duties, they will be permitted to carry weapons and will be trained in methods of conflict. To assist them in their duties, the park will be divided into multiple zones that allow the backcountry rangers to radio for assistance from frontcountry rangers servicing the zone. This assistance may be hiking to a backcountry campsite to provide additional manpower or provide supplies, or possibly providing vehicle transportation from the nearest trailhead to the violating party's vehicle.

Such services will benefit the roughly 72,000 backpackers who sleep in the Smokies each year, although the will cost. Although I can understand wanting to charge the backpackers, I cannot understand not charging the other visitors to the park who enjoy tremendous benefits such as frontcountry ranger stations, paved roads, outhouses, lookouts, etc. It does make me wonder if the budget allotted to the Smokies each year isn't being unfairly used for the benefit of automobile users of the park and withheld from the hiking users of the park.

To conclude, I am not a person who says "no way Jose" to most proposals, because there is often something of virtue in them. I see much of virtue in this proposal. I am, however, concerned about the perception of fairness. If hikers must be charged for services, then shouldn't auto users, horses, and others be charged as well? Further, if reservation services are to be enhanced, I hope it will include a more robust system of enforcement.

Sincerely,  
Dean Ratzlaff  
Hiker from Louisville area



6  
Coralie Bloom/GRSM/NPS

08/31/2011 09:36 AM

To Melissa Cobern/GRSM/NPS@NPS

cc

bcc

Subject Fw: From NPS.gov: backcountry use

One for you.

Coralie Bloom  
Great Smoky Mountains National Park

EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA

The National Park Service cares for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.

----- Forwarded by Coralie Bloom/GRSM/NPS on 08/31/2011 09:35 AM -----



mhfloan@bellsouth.net

08/31/2011 09:05 AM

To GRSM\_Smokies\_Information@nps.gov

cc

Subject From NPS.gov: backcountry use

Email submitted from: mhfloan@bellsouth.net

Mailing Address

michael floan  
613 n shiloh rd  
seymour, tn 37865  
usa

Please forward this to park management,I have written before regarding backcountry use and fees.I also added,that I am in favor of a different permit process.We should make it more difficult to get permits and use backcountry to help maintain a wilderness worth visiting.I volunteer for the park and visit regularly.I am appalled at the amount of trash that is being left behind and Yesterday walked into a campsight that smelled like a toilet.I found numerous areas where people had bowel movements inside and all around the campsight.I cleaned the mess up and will continue to do so,but I am ashamed that people will visit here and be subjected to that.I have also sent trail and campsite reports to Christine Hoyer.People should have to prove that they have the right to come in and use our incredible backcountry.Part of the permit process could be testing them for knowledge of the LNT ethics.And also a full accountning of there activities,while they are in the backcountry.If you charge fees,you could pay somebody to take care of this.Some of the things I have seen while visiting GSMNP really make me cringe.Let's put a stop to it.



14  
Dale Ditmanson/GRSM/NPS  
09/16/2011 01:34 PM

To: Melissa Cobern/GRSM/NPS@NPS

cc

bcc

Subject: Fw: GSMNP Backcountry Fee Anger

FYI - some constructive thought in his last message

Dale A. Ditmanson  
Superintendent  
Great Smoky Mountains National Park  
107 Park Headquarters Road  
Gatlinburg, TN 37738  
865-436-1201  
865-436-1204 (fax)

----- Forwarded by Dale Ditmanson/GRSM/NPS on 09/16/2011 01:33 PM -----



Adam Beal  
<adam.s.beal@gmail.com>  
09/12/2011 11:19 AM

To: Dale\_Ditmanson@nps.gov

cc

Subject: Re: Fw: GSMNP Backcountry Fee Anger

Thank you for the email Superintendent Ditmanson. I am sorry for going over your head on this I just assumed your position was set on this and frankly was trying to put pressure on you or others at the NPS to either modify the proposal dramatically or drop it altogether. I have really tried to understand the difficult position you are in with folks complaining about stuff going on in the backcountry and yet at the same time are against this particular fee proposal which you believe would solve those complaints. I have thought a lot about this and why it upsets me personally. It isn't the money I would be glad to pay the money to help the park. I love the park. I think it is really about freedom and our freedom being taken away by abuses at highly trafficked sites. Some of us like to camp at little used and remote sites and there is just a great sense of freedom to be able to do that without having to get on a computer and pay money in advance to sleep in a spot that no one really ever visits. How that could be addressed is a real problem and very difficult to answer. I don't think there would be many people at all upset if high fees and reservations were put on the top 25 most used sites like shelters close to the road since that is where most of the abuse problem lies. Most of the folks who drink and carry on aren't going to walk 3+ miles to avoid a fee it is just too far and they are looking for easy access. One possibility might be to put the top 25 visited backcountry sites on the new pay registration system and price them higher at something akin to the \$10 per night and leave the rest as a self register kiosk type system with a very small or negligible fee like \$1- \$2 per person per night that is paid on an honor system sort of method by envelope at the kiosk. Most of the folks that camp at the lesser traveled sites would pay I believe most that want to get away to those places love the park and are good people. That would still probably bring in enough to fund at least one new backcountry ranger at first and possibly 2 depending on how much was brought in. I know that would be more difficult for the NPS than a one size fits all system since you would have to potentially pay for a system that doesn't cover all of the sites. However, if you are just adding on to the current

recreation.gov then it might not be as expensive since it is just extending an existing system and would give you the ability to add, remove, or replace sites that fall under the stricter rules should you deem it necessary. I think that would also give people the feeling that the park is really "watching" these heavily used areas with the problems more and not out to harass some folks who like to really camp deep in the backcountry because they want to be alone and enjoy that sense of freedom. It's the disparity between Icewater Springs shelter and remote sites being treated equally that makes the current proposed system hard for many. In any case I wish you luck with your decisions on this matter sir and thanks for listening to me yet again.

Adam Beal

On Mon, Sep 12, 2011 at 10:13 AM, <Dale\_Ditmanson@nps.gov> wrote:

Dear Mr. Beal, your message was sent to me by Regional Director David Vela to respond to. We appreciate your interest in the proposed backcountry fee at Great Smoky Mountains National Park. We are in the process of compiling the comments received and our intent is to prepare a response to the substantive comments and share that information with the public.

Dale A. Ditmanson  
Superintendent  
Great Smoky Mountains National Park  
107 Park Headquarters Road  
Gatlinburg, TN 37738  
865-436-1201  
865-436-1204 (fax)

David  
Vela/Atlanta/NPS

To

09/09/2011 03:42 PM Dale\_Ditmanson@nps.gov, "Kevin Fitzgerald"

<Kevin\_Fitzgerald@nps.gov>

cc

"Gordon Wissinger"  
<Gordon\_Wissinger@nps.gov>, "Erika Blevins" <Erika\_Blevins@nps.gov>

Subject

Fw: GSMNP Backcountry Fee Anger

Hi Dale,  
As per our previous discussion.

Have a great day.  
David

David Vela  
Regional Director  
Southeast Region  
(404) 507-5603

From: Adam Beal [[adam.s.beal@gmail.com](mailto:adam.s.beal@gmail.com)]  
Sent: 09/08/2011 02:16 PM AST  
To: David Vela  
Subject: GSMNP Backcountry Fee Anger

Dear Mr. Vela,

I am with a group of citizens organizing an effort to stop the proposed backcountry fees by the GSMNP. This bothers us because we live near the mountains and have camped in the Smokies for free for the last 76 years. Now that camping in the backcountry is down overall this proposal comes out which penalizes locals and families with children most of all. I am planning on attending protests at several Tennessee Congressman and Senators local offices in the next couple of weeks. I thought you as NPS director should see some of the press this issue is getting up here before it comes across your desk. Here are some links to stories in North Carolina

and Tennessee newspapers this week:

From the Knoxville News Sentinel

<http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2011/sep/05/parks-proposed-backcountry-fee-stirs-debate/>

From the Ashville Citizen Times

<http://www.citizen-times.com/article/20110905/OUTDOORS/309050020/Petition-No-Smoke-s-fees?odyssey=tab%7Cmostpopular%7Cimg%7CFRONTPAGE>

Sincerely,

Adam Beal  
Maryville, TN



"Michael & Heather Floan"  
<mhfloan@bellsouth.net>

12/02/2011 12:22 PM

To <clay\_jordan@nps.gov>, <nancy\_gray@nps.gov>,  
<melissa\_cobern@nps.gov>

cc

bcc

Subject Fees for Smoky Mtn Nat Park

Several weeks ago I read article put out by one of the TV networks talking about the possibility of fees for using backcountry. I for one, would rather not pay money to enter such a beautiful area and think it would be against what the Nat Park System was set up for originally. But after doing volunteer work for the last year @SMNP, I not only believe fees should be charged, I also think there should be a better system in place for people to get permits to go into and camp in the backcountry. I ran into many people, doing trail and campsite maintenance, and trekking. I spoke with many people about their time spent in the park, and realized, there were many people who didn't plan very well for their trips. There were many instances of camping places other than specified campsites. People not going to campsites they had said they were going to, people who admitted they didn't realize what they were getting into, until after they got on the trails. If the park took a little more comprehensive look at what backcountry users plans were, instead of just how many people and which campsites they were using, it might enhance their time there. Have them take a test on Leave No Trace, get a more comprehensive plan, such as which trails are going to be used, experience level, Knowledge of the particular trails they are using. The other thing I would love to see is ban campfires in the backcountry. They become dumpsites for trash, which people think can be burned. Plus they are not put out properly. If they want to camp with a fire let them go to the campgrounds where there are Rangers around who can oversee things. I have cleaned up much trash, and cleaned out many campsites, but it is a constant problem. Fees for use may allow the park system to have better oversight with the above issues. I spend a fair amt of time in the park and believe in the LNT ethics, and want the park to retain its natural appearance. Make it more difficult for people to get in there. It is a PRIVILEGE NOT A RIGHT.....Thankyou for your attention  
Floan VIP Michael



## Appalachian Long Distance Hikers Association

10 Benning St., PMB 224, West Lebanon, NH 03784 [www.aldha.org](http://www.aldha.org)

From the Desk of the ALDHA Coordinator

Michael D. Wingear

"Wing-heart"

16603 Dubbs Rd

Sparks, MD 21152-9565

410-472-4951 (H)

443-791-9196 (C)

[coordinator@aldha.org](mailto:coordinator@aldha.org)

November 21, 2011

Mr. Dale Ditmanson  
Park Superintendent  
Greater Smoky Mountain National Park  
107 Park headquarters Rd  
Gatlinburg, TN 37738

Dear Mr. Ditmanson,

The Appalachian Long Distance Hikers Association, a group of over 1500 members, would like to go on the record as opposing the implementing of the Park fees.

Our entire organization meets only once a year. This year we met at our 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Gathering on Columbus weekend, October 8-9, 2011. We discussed the GSMNP proposal to implement fees for overnight hiking/backpacking in the Park. After lengthy discussion a motion was made and voted on to oppose these fees.

It was unavoidable that we respond within the timelines of your open discussion; ALDHA wants to "weigh in" on the discussion and sincerely hope that you will consider our position in this matter.

Please feel that you or your staff can call or email me at any time to discuss this further.

Sincerely,

Michael D. Wingear  
ALDHA's Coordinator

Motion: Whereas the Great Smoky Mountain National Park (GSMNP) is considering charging fees for the use of backcountry campsites, ALDHA oppose fees for hiking/backpacking/camping/shelter use for the following reasons:

1. NPS- provided data demonstrates that backcountry use in the GSMNP has significantly declined from a peak approximately 15 years ago.
2. The assignment of fees to backcountry users' irresponsibility targets the group of individuals who are most likely to protect the Park and its resources, yet fails to address the significant damage to the Park wrought by front country visitors.
3. It is unlikely that all the funds collected under the proposal would, in practice, actually find its way to "improve on those experiences that people have in the backcountry."
4. In the extremely difficult financial times for many individuals and families, the Park's timing for this proposal is unseasonable and will induce financial hardships on some of its finest and future stewards.
5. The procedures needed to collect these fees from AT Hikers would indeed be a concern because of the logistics involved.

And perhaps most importantly,

The GSMNP is prohibited from the charging of an entrance fee under deed restrictions imposed at the time of the Park's formation. ALDHA is concerned that enacting a fee for the use of the backcountry violates the spirit of the original Park agreement, which was to provide a resource "for the permanent enjoyment of the people."



National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
Great Smoky Mountains National Park



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**We Welcome Your Comments!** First, I appreciate the hard work of rangers, volunteers and support staff. Comments: Why not designate specific sites for reservations - the problem sites - and leave lesser used sites alone?

My concern is not the cost but that the system will limit my access and backpacking trips.

My experience with on-line reservation systems - other national parks, state parks, etc. - is that sites get booked and you can't get in. I have attempted on-line reservations on public land more than eight or nine times but NEVER have been successful.

Can you include a provision that if the reservation is unclaimed by certain hour (they do this @ Glacier), it can be released so others can use it?

Name Cindy McJunkin  
Address 30 Pisgah Methodist Ch. Rd.  
City, State & Zip Code Candler NC 28715  
Daytime Phone 828 712 9646

Thank you for listening tonight.

Sorry but I have difficulty believing that these funds will specifically be spent on services for backcountry users. Things change, administrators leave, and promises are unkept. And the prices inevitably increase. Twenty some

N

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
Great Smoky Mountains National Park



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## We Welcome Your Comments!

The park needs To Repair horse RACKS.  
we would use them more if we were not  
AFRAID OUR horses would get away or worst hunt!

LAST YEAR ON HAZEL Creek we had A pole  
break AND hunt the leg of A mule.

I don't mind paying, BUT I AM concerned  
it will be hard To Reserve A spot.

Jim Minney

Name

PO Box 365

Address

Cullowhee NC 28723

City, State & Zip Code

Daytime Phone

828-421-4501



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## We Welcome Your Comments!

I believe the park should implement this policy because those of us who do follow the back country rules are being endangered or displaced by people who do not follow the rules. Fines levied against violators in the back country should go back to the back country program.

These people are trashing the back country & harming the animals & plants & polluting the waters.

I have witnessed countless acts that could not only endanger the person committing the act but people in their general vicinity.

LYNN SCHMERBER  
Name  
5573 F. Riley W. DR  
Address  
Greenback TN 37742  
City, State & Zip Code  
765-618-2529  
Daytime Phone



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## We Welcome Your Comments!

I support your fee & policing program, my concern is people will reserve sites then cancel due to weather or whatever & tie sites up. We need to prevent people booking & no shows. Maybe a 48hr or 72hr. limit on reservations.

Lynn Schmerbers  
Name 5573 F. Riley W DR  
Address Greenback TN 37742  
City, State & Zip Code  
Daytime Phone 765-618-2529



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## We Welcome Your Comments!

I oppose any fee to be used for back country camping. It is just a "Forest" and not a green one. Money collected will not be used for the purpose it is intended and any fee charged or reservation system used is being designed to limit access to the "Park", which is just what this Park Administration and others are ~~are~~ wanting to do. Basically the creation of a "Buffer" zone around property owned by all Americans so as to keep us out. If this is allowed, then what will be next for the Park Administration to do - "Close all roads" only permitting buses with a fee charged - Your plans are to keep people out! I oppose any fees!  
"If you could manage what money is given to you" through taxes paid and not "waste" it - you would not have a problem!

Jim Douthett  
Name  
Jim Douthett  
Address  
170 Gossett Rd Bryson City, N.C.  
City, State & Zip Code  
Daytime Phone 828-488-6331

77 Park SVC

I very much oppose charging  
for back country camping in the  
Smoky Mtn National Park -

Margaret Asher  
Greensboro NC 28713

I VERY MUCH  
FOR BACK COUNTRY  
THE GSM, T

OPPOSE CHARGING  
CAMPING IN

MACK STANLEY  
Bryson City



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## We Welcome Your Comments!

Non-Profit with Special use Permit  
needs to be considered.

Outdoor Mission Camp is a Christian based outdoor mission program. We rely on the use of the Park to change children's lives! We are located next to Catalochee Ranch in Maggie Valley, Part of our mission as a camp is to take to Haywood County court ordered kids. We believe that taking these kids into the park allows them to find their inner strengths since most have not experienced backpacking and camping. We have seen the Lord work in these young kids. They come out changed; and also learn to respect God's Creation. We pray and hope that the park will take this into consideration. This is a big part of our ministry and we hope that we can continue to change these children's lives through this great opportunity of the park!! May God bless your decision. Thank you!

Name

2514 Fire Top Rd

Address

Maggie Valley, NC 28751

City, State & Zip Code

Daytime Phone

828-926-3253

336-583-4932



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National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
Great Smoky Mountains National Park



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## We Welcome Your Comments!

Dont wanna pay for back country sites.  
Fix the problem with front country reservation systems  
before you take on a bigger load. It will only  
make your some problems bigger =

Brad Milzon your cousin  
Name  
1919 old 5000 Rd  
Address  
Cherokee NC 28719  
City, State & Zip Code  
Daytime Phone 506 8811

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## We Welcome Your Comments

The National Park Service preserves the extraordinary natural and cultural resources of Great Smoky Mountains National Park for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. The staff and volunteers of Great Smoky Mountains National Park are committed to providing park visitors with excellent service. We value your comments and suggestions. Please let us know how we can make your visit safe and enjoyable.

Recreation.gov is not user friendly  
Need sign marking location of Rocky  
TOP - National Treasure

Thank you for your interest in  
Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

Cleston Jones  
Name  
2148 Pine Meade Rd  
Address  
Knoxville TN 37923  
865-805-1110  
Daytime Phone  
8/26/11 -

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

Name and location of person receiving comment.

Date and time of incident (a.m. or p.m.)

Action taken by worker receiving comment: (I advised the visitor that..., I solved the problem by...)

Route to: Employee's Supervisor  
Division Chief  
Superintendent


Great Smoky Mountains National Park  
107 Park Headquarters Road  
Gatlinburg, TN 37738



## We Welcome Your Comments

The National Park Service preserves the extraordinary natural and cultural resources of Great Smoky Mountains National Park for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. The staff and volunteers of Great Smoky Mountains National Park are committed to providing park visitors with excellent service. We value your comments and suggestions. Please let us know how we can make your visit safe and enjoyable.

Charge a per night fee for all backcountry campsites. Also make all campsites rationed campsites. Use the funds to clean up our dirty park. Also we can hire more backcountry rangers to police the people that destroy our backcountry sites.

P.S. first money taken in needs to pay for a sign at rocky top. 

Thank you for your interest in  
Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

Name Daniel Jennette  
Address P.O. Box 18  
Hartford, TN 37753  
Daytime Phone 865-696-0312

### FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

Name and location of person receiving comment: \_\_\_\_\_

Date and time of incident (a.m. or p.m.): \_\_\_\_\_

Action taken by worker receiving comment: (I advised the visitor that..., I solved the problem by...) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Route to: Employee's Supervisor  
Division Chief  
Superintendent

Great Smoky Mountains National Park  
107 Park Headquarters Road  
Gatlinburg, TN 37738

14  
Is this legal? This is charging  
AN ENTRANCE FEE. WHEN THE PARK  
WAS ESTABLISHED there was to be  
NO ENTRANCE fee charged. This is  
NOT, or should not be considered A USER fee  
WHAT ABOUT GOLDEN AGE OR GOLDEN  
PASSPORT?

Will there be A discount or NO  
CHARGE FOR PERSONS OVER 65?

Will there be A discount for  
PERSONS with over 50 backpacking  
trips, over 25 backpacking trips.

This is going to create A very  
GREAT MANY problems.

I have been backpacking in the park  
SINCE 1948. CAN I CONTINUE.

SHELTERS ARE VERY MUCH ABUSED.  
CAN WE PUT A PERMANENT RANGER  
AT EACH shelter.

Margen Briggs



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## We Welcome Your Comments!

I fully support the - PARKS efforts to implement a fee that will subsequently result in further protection and conservation of our resources. I hope that the surrounding community can realize the benefits of this change and contribute towards a better harmony for the enjoyment of all who love the Smokies.

Tara Tyrell

Name

4413 East scenic Drive

Address

Gatlinburg 37738

City, State & Zip Code

Daytime Phone

865-654-7133

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National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
Great Smoky Mountains National Park



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## We Welcome Your Comments!

We are so happy to  
finally have backcountry rangers!  
Thank you.

Option 1 is our choice

Jenna Plakans

Name

4413 E. Senior Dr

Address

Gallup, IN 37738

City, State & Zip Code

Daytime Phone

865-436-2253

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U.S. Department of the Interior  
Great Smoky Mountains National Park**



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## We Welcome Your Comments!

It is great that the park is working on  
funding the protection of the backcountry.  
A Permit fee is long overdue.

Personally, I prefer the \$10 per Reservation, \$5 per person  
option.

ERIK PLAKAUS  
Name  
4413 SCENE DRIVE  
Address  
GATLINBURG, TN 37738  
City, State & Zip Code  
436-8283  
Daytime Phone

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
Great Smoky Mountains National Park



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We Welcome Your Comments!

1. Put the picnic area symbols - back on the trail map.
2. If backcountry fee structure is implemented, allow "Senior Pass" card holders a 50% discount.

Name Ronnie McGhee  
Address PO Box 1846  
City, State & Zip Code Newport, TN 37822  
Daytime Phone 423-625-0739





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## We Welcome Your Comments!

IF THIS IS GOING TO BE "LAW" → PLEASE  
ENFORCE IT OR DON'T DO IT

DO YOU HAVE THE MANPOWER TO ENFORCE IT??  
550,000 ACRES 800 MILES OF  
TRAIL WITH 2 RANGERS!

DON'T LET THIS BECOME LIKE "DOGS ON THE TRAIL"

A LAW THAT IS NOT ENFORCED

POSSIBLY DUE TO "POLITICS", OR  
BEING POLITICALLY CORRECT

Name

Address

City, State & Zip Code

Daytime Phone



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## We Welcome Your Comments!

I just wanted to take a moment to share my support for the park's proposal for restructuring of the backcountry reservation & permit process. I spent over a year working in the Sugarlands Visitor Center (first as an intern & later as a seasonal interpret ranger). I can't count how many times I had to try to placate irritated/frustrated would-be backpackers because they were trying to do the right thing (ie getting the proper permit) & they simply couldn't get through on the phone line to the backcountry office. One person trying to handle the sheer volume of ~~back~~ backcountry requests was simply an impossible task. The new permit system would allow for so much more personable, 1 on 1 time for campers to plan their trip w/ a knowledgeable park staff member. Furthermore, I fully support the proposal in that it would allow for backcountry rangers to be active in the areas they're needed most. This is the most visited Nat'l Park; it stands to reason there should be back-country rangers.

Samantha Ray (A Walk in the Woods)

Name

Address

Gallatinburg, TN

City, State & Zip Code

Daytime Phone

(865) 776-5357



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## We Welcome Your Comments!

- ~~Instead of a~~
- A LOT of locals are in the park every other weekend. A yearly park pass would ease the financial burden on backpackers - hundreds of dollars
- Mt Rainier charges 30\$ for a YEARLY backcountry permit
- If GSMNP issued this ~~an~~ pass with individual numbers it could be used in the electronic reservation system under the payment section
- I hope something like this is considered, I won't be able to visit the park much if it isn't

JIM BARN

Name  
4318 Waverford Dr

Address  
Louisville, TN 37777

City, State & Zip Code

Daytime Phone  
865-384-2955



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## We Welcome Your Comments!

Instead of charging the backpacking minority,  
charge to Park at trailheads and in parking  
lots. 2\$ a car would go a LONG way. You  
could also offer a yearly parking pass.

JIM BAN

Name

4318 Wardenford Dr

Address

Louisville, TN 37777

City, State & Zip Code

Daytime Phone 865-384-2955



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## We Welcome Your Comments!

With the current economic conditions  
a fee for a park we're already paying  
for seems unreasonable

What about a fee for parking in the  
park (or overnight parking). This would  
generate much more revenue.

Even \$1<sup>00</sup> would generate lots of money.

This would include All trail users  
not just Backcountry campers.

Charles Gould

26 Dycamore Dr  
Bulls Gap TN 37711

Daytime Phone 1/33 312 5125



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## We Welcome Your Comments!

I am not against paying a fee for back country camping. However, I am against outsourcing our work to other states. I believe that if the money from fees could be used to create more jobs for the local economy, then you would be able to inform unfamiliar hikers with the area. You can't tell me that some telephone operator from BFE, will be able to give accurate information to someone hiking thousands of miles away. Hire someone who hikes this National Park, and prevent further injuries and damage to a park I love dearly!

Preston Mayes

Name

1380 Ski View Dr.

Address

Gatlinburg, TN. 37738

City, State & Zip Code

Daytime Phone

(865) 318-0117



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## We Welcome Your Comments!

As a Volunteer for the PARK (Backcountry Office & Trails) and as a BACKPACKER/hiker I am concerned mostly about the out sourcing of this project. My question / suggestion would be to hire from within this community rather than outsource. There are numerous citizens that love this PARK, have knowledge of the trails & campsites. Which also means they have knowledge of camp-sites w/ issues such as low water / no water in summer, no wood for fires, etc etc. I believe that a Reservation.gov system is too impersonal & too many people that are inexperienced will not get the time & information they need. Create Revenue by charging for the PARK while at the same time creating jobs for the citizens of this community that love this PARK & want to see it succeed. I am not against charging for all sites reserved - I am AGAINST outsourcing jobs to people that have no clue about this PARK.

Missy Whit  
Name 1380 Ski View drive Unit 2301  
Address Gatlinburg, TN 37738  
City, State & Zip Code 805-436-1347  
Daytime Phone (cell) 423-736-8669

Thank you.

By the way -  
Keep Pam Rodgers in  
the Backcountry office!



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## We Welcome Your Comments!

1<sup>ST</sup> YOU'RE CHARGING AN EXTRA FEE FOR A PROPOSED JOB/SERVICE THAT YOU SHOULD ALREADY BE OVERSEEING

2<sup>ND</sup> THE RESTRICTIONS OF BEING LOCKED INTO STAYING AT A PRE-DETERMINED SITE FLIES IN THE FACE OF THE EXPERIENCED BACKCOUNTRY HIKER'S FREEDOM.

3<sup>RD</sup> IN MY COUNTLESS YEARS OF BACKCOUNTRY HIKING, I'VE NEVER SEEN AN OVERCROWDED SITE. HECK, YOU RARELY EVEN SEE ANYONE ELSE PERIOD.

4<sup>TH</sup> THERE'S NO WAY THE MEAGER REVENUE GAINED FROM THIS CAN FUND THE SALARIES OF 2 FULL TIME RANGERS & WEBSITE PROVIDER.

JOEY BRIDGES

Name

2011 SPANISH MOSS WAY #A1

Address

KNOXVILLE TENNESSEE

City, State & Zip Code

37916

Daytime Phone





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## We Welcome Your Comments!

I am not totally opposed to a backcountry camping fee. However, I believe the fee for a backcountry site should be less than for a frontcountry site. For example, if a frontcountry site is \$20, then a backcountry site should be no more than \$10. ~~the~~ ~~\$10 fee should~~

If a fee structure is initiated I believe it should be setup so that it is easily administered. For example,

- 1) reservations should be easily obtained
- 2) ~~fee~~ there should be a maximum fee (for either # of nights or # of campers or both)
- 3) the ability to obtain an "annual pass" should be considered. Oftentimes, when I'm camping or backpacking I have a lot of gear to keep up with don't want to carry money.

Patrick Bledsoe

Name 4030 Sutherland Ave #101

Address Knoxville TN 37919

City, State & Zip Code (865) 803-2996

Daytime Phone

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
Great Smoky Mountains National Park



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## We Welcome Your Comments!

I agree there is a need for a greater presence in the backcountry but some of the proposed fees are unreasonable. The \$10/reservation fees are especially burdensome for local backpackers who frequently stay one or two nights at a time.

It seems the majority of problems are caused by a few hikers and isolated to specific backcountry sites. The majority of sites are used infrequently. The problem could probably be addressed with just a few months of heavy enforcement in targeted locations (CS 86, 264, 21, et) without the need for a fee.

Buster Flynn  
Name  
582 Mountain Dr.  
Address  
Cottrellburg, TN 37738  
City, State & Zip Code  
865 325 9325  
Daytime Phone



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## We Welcome Your Comments!

As a local, I have found it very difficult to camp in the park camp grounds because of the reservation system. Because of that fact we have relied on the back country camp sites. With a large family the fees would have to be low or we wouldn't be able to enjoy camping anymore.

Maybe fees could be charged to people from outside the counties that touch upon the Smokies.

Consideration must be given to the fact that not everyone has internet and not everyone can plan a trip well in advance enough to secure a ~~res~~ spot with a reservation.

A complete reservation system will not deter people from abusing the camps, so unregistered camping will continue.

Penny L Wisell

Name

63 S Wye Drive

Address

Seymour TN 37865

City, State & Zip Code

965-429-5061

Daytime Phone

Please notify me of any future meetings on this issue.

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
Great Smoky Mountains National Park



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## We Welcome Your Comments!

Thanks for the opportunity to talk about this with park officials. Hopefully more meetings are planned since some folks didn't know about this proposal. Also glad to hear the more expensive options were dropped in favor of the \$4 per night option.

Name Adam Beal  
Address 2941 Country Meadows Ln  
City, State & Zip Code Maryville, TN 37803  
Daytime Phone 865-384-4551

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
Great Smoky Mountains National Park



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## We Welcome Your Comments!

AS LONG AS THE FEES (OR MAJORITY OF) ARE GOING DIRECTLY INTO THE PARK, I WOULD NOT BE OPPOSED TO PAYING A MODERATE FEE FOR BACKCOUNTRY RESERVATIONS. I HAVE NO PROBLEM SUPPORTING SOMETHING THAT I LOVE. I THINK THAT THE MOST TROUBLE WILL COME FROM 1.) RESERVATION CONVENIENCE AND 2.) REGULATION ENFORCEMENT.

SOME OF MY IDEAS INCLUDE:

- BACKCOUNTRY PASS (PRE-PAID "MEMBERSHIP") (SEASONAL)
  - PAY PER NIGHT UP TO "X" NIGHTS & FLAT FEE AFTER THAT
  - FLEXIBILITY IN RESERVATION ALTERATIONS (NO ADD-ON FEES!)
- ANNUAL PASSES FOR TN/NC RESIDENTS

CLINT WAYMAN

Name 5908 HOLSTON VIEW LANE

Address KNOXVILLE, TN 37914

City, State & Zip Code

Daytime Phone 865-323-2141

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**National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
Great Smoky Mountains National Park**



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## We Welcome Your Comments!

I'm not opposed to reasonable fees for back country use, I hope that we do see some improvement in back country presence if this does go through. I also have a concern that some day down the road these LEOs will be removed to use them in the front country where issues are more likely to arise, but backpackers will continue to pay fees for no service.

Please work with the contractors in order to make policies that are more back country friendly, as it stands now the rules of recreation.gov are onerous to hikers.

I would also like to see an annual flat fee, and a program that rewards volunteers with free nights in the backcountry.

I also feel you will find most of the issues are occurring at horse camps. I recommend you put these new LEOs on horseback so that they can cover more.

- See back -

Ernest Engman AKA "SGT Rock" on Whiteblaze

Name	3850 Laws Chapel Rd
Address	Maryville TN 37803
City, State & Zip Code	865-924-5992
Daytime Phone	865-380-9107



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## We Welcome Your Comments!

I HAVE SPENT OVER 300 NIGHTS IN THE SMOKIES BACKCOUNTRY IN THE PAST FIVE YEARS. NOT ONCE HAVE I ENCOUNTERED A CAMPSITE THAT WAS OVER ITS LIMIT. ON MOST NIGHTS, MY HIKING PARTNER AND I HAVE HAD THE SITE TO OURSELVES.

IN ALL THE TIMES THAT I HAVE USED A RESERVE SITE, I HAVE ONLY ONCE BEEN TOLD THAT A SITE WAS COMPLETELY BOOKED. THIS OCCURED ON A HOLIDAY WEEKEND AND WAS NOT A SURPRISE TO ME.

ALMOST EVERY TIME THAT I HAVE CALLED THE BACKCOUNTRY OFFICE, MY CALL WAS ANSWERED QUICKLY. THE BACKCOUNTRY PEOPLE HAVE ALWAYS BEEN FRIENDLY AND HELPFUL.

FROM MY EXPERIENCE, I DISAGREE THAT THERE IS A PROBLEM THAT NEEDS TO BE ADDRESSED.

→  
OVER

Name JENN KOZAK  
Address 161 LAKE SCENE RD  
City, State & Zip Code KINGSTON, TN 37763  
Daytime Phone 865-717-8029



The mission of the National Park Service is "... to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations." --National Park Service Organic Act, 16 U.S.C.

## We Welcome Your Comments!

Thank you for providing the public a way to ~~discuss~~ discuss and comment on the backcountry fee proposal. I am opposed to the institution of fees for backcountry camping because I feel it singles out a tiny group of park users who are ~~prob~~ probably among the most respectful and conscientious visitors to the park. I do not understand why, after 80 years of no-fee camping in the backcountry, that a fee is suddenly required. I spend several nights a year camping, as well as day hiking, and I rarely see anyone at BC sites, or even on trails that are a significant distance from the road. I realize some campsites are problematic. I think patrols could be stepped up at those particular sites to control misconduct, but the majority of BC sites do not require it. If a fee is unavoidable, I would choose the option that would impose the least cost on those of us who live locally and camp frequently. I also hope additional meetings are scheduled for the public that will be more organized than this one at Sugarlands so that people can hear one another.

Amanda Beal

Name

2141 Country Meadows Ln

Address

Maryville TN 37803

City, State & Zip Code

865 207 1469

Daytime Phone





The mission of the National Park Service is "... to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations." --National Park Service Organic Act, 16 U.S.C.

## We Welcome Your Comments!

I guess I should first mention that I am initially opposed to charging a backcountry fee. While I don't camp as much as some others I have not seen a great need for a backcountry ranger presence. In all the sites I have been to or hiked past I could have carried the trash out in a small Walmart bag. None have ~~been~~ ever been over-crowded either, even on weekends. I also foresee that if a fee is implemented the donation dollars given by Friends of the Smokies or the GSMA will decrease. I feel this is something that should definitely be considered. Perhaps my greatest opposition is due to the fact that my grandmother was born & lived inside what is now the National Park. This combined with the idea that there was never to be a fee is hard to swallow. All that being said thank you for the opportunity to be heard. The Chief Ranger (Clayton) was extremely ~~helpful~~ helpful and answered every question we had.

Justin & Ashley Ball

Name 2530 Dogwood Lane

Address Talbott, TN 37877

City, State & Zip Code (865) 765-2869

Daytime Phone



The mission of the National Park Service is "... to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations." --National Park Service Organic Act, 16 U.S.C.

## We Welcome Your Comments!

There should be another meeting  
perhaps in thirty days to allow  
for a more in depth meeting  
that is better organized and to discuss  
some of the Ideas you received on the 16<sup>th</sup> & 18<sup>th</sup>  
~~the~~ IF implemented it should be  
reviewed in six mths or 1 year  
to "tweak the system" all fees  
should be minimal and not "stacked fees"  
the system will have to be flexible  
to a point because of dangerous  
creek crossings or other unforeseen  
hazards that may keep you from destination  
There should be able to be spontaneous  
atmosphere, to a point. thru hikers need too pay also  
if implemented on A.T. where they often overcrowd  
shelters now

Mark Wisell

Name

638 Wye Dr.

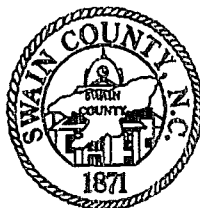
Address

Seymour TN 37865-

City, State & Zip Code

865-429-5061

Daytime Phone



**Board of Commissioners**

Phil Carson, Chair  
Robert White, Vice-Chair  
David Monteith, Member  
Donnie Dixon, Member  
Steve Moon, Member

**Clerk to the Board**

Cindi C. Woodard  
c\_woodard@swaincountync.gov

**Swain County**

101 Mitchell Street  
P.O. Box 2321  
Bryson City, NC 28713

**County Manager**

Kevin S. King  
manager@swaincountync.gov

Telephone: (828) 488-9273  
(828) 488-2600  
Fax: (828) 488-2754

August 16, 2010

Mr. Dale Ditmanson  
Superintendent, GSMNP  
Gatlinburg, TN 37738

Dear Mr. Ditmanson,

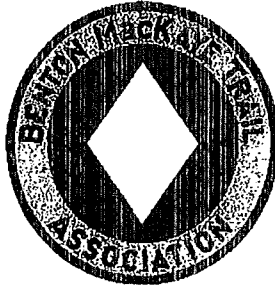
This letter is in regards to the proposed implementation of a fee for back country camping. Over the years many of our Swain County residents have enjoyed camping in the Great Smoky Mountain National Park in designated camping sites in the back country. Our residents use this opportunity to visit cemeteries and home places of their ancestors. Swain County has years of history associated with the land that is now the GSMNP and the TVA reservoir area of the County. People should have the opportunity to teach their children about this rich history without having to pay. Swain County and its citizens have given enough.

Therefore, the Board of Commissioners feels that you should not impose any fees for camping overnight at these back country sites.

Thank you,

Sincerely,

Phil Carson, Chairman



**P. O. Box 6  
Cherry Log, GA 30522**

**Web Site : [www.bmta.org](http://www.bmta.org)  
Email : [President@BMTA.org](mailto:President@BMTA.org)  
08/16/11**

**Park Superintendent Dale Ditmanson  
Great Smoky Mountains National Park  
107 Park Headquarters Road  
Gatlinburg, TN 37738**

**Dear Superintendent Ditmanson,**

**The following comments and questions are in reference to the "Backcountry Office & Permit System Restructuring Proposal" distributed early this month. I forwarded the Proposal and Press Release to the 400 members of the Benton MacKaye Trail Association, and the notes below are a synthesis of the responses to that distribution. Comments and questions have been reviewed by the Board of Directors of the BMTA, and this represents an official response by the BMTA to the Proposal.**

General Comments – The BMTA compliments Park Management for recognizing that the current Reservation process has become a major source of problems. Given the improvements in communication methods the past several years, we agree that a newer and more convenient system is in order. The Restructuring Proposal, as circulated, has a number of concerns for the BMTA. We feel that the easiest way to elucidate these is with a numbered list for clarification.

1. Dogs on Trails-This issue is mentioned in multiple places in the Proposal and the Press Release. We agree that dogs on trails are a major issue, but we feel that part of this problem is the general public perception that dogs ON LEASHES are permitted. Indeed, when talking to dog owners walking dogs on trails, we constantly hear that they are permitted on leashes, when they clearly are not. Several times, dog owners have pointed out the small NPS sign posted as clearly showing a dog with no leash, and use that as justification for their erroneous belief that dogs on leash are permitted. We do not feel that there is a large population of dog owners who would deliberately walk their dogs in clear violation of a Park Rule, so we think that improved signage would be a major step in helping to solve this issue. A sign that said, for example, "No Dogs Beyond This Point." would do a better job in communicating the Rule to owners. We understand the NPS desire for small, unobtrusive signs, but clearly the current signs are not functioning as intended.
2. A further point regarding dogs on trails is that, in our experience, we never see back country campers with dogs. All the dogs we see are with either day hikers or boaters landing in the Park, and we feel that to, as intended, charge a fee to the back country campers for enforcement of a rule that is most often violated by day hikers is wrong. If dogs on the trails are a problem, and we agree they are, charging non-violators with a fee to be used for enforcement of this rule is a misuse of those funds. This is part of the normal law enforcement duties in the Park, not something caused by campers in the backcountry.

3. An additional point is that of dogs landing from boats in the Park along Fontana Lake. There is a general perception, perhaps based on reality, that Park lands actually start 10 vertical feet ABOVE high water level, and that dogs are permitted in that area. Again, clear signage would improve this situation. Eagle Creek, Hazel Creek, Pilkey Creek and Kirkland Creek areas are where we commonly see this issue.

4. The Background portion of the Proposal mentions overcrowding of back country campsites by "non-permitted" campers, and includes the phrase "(non-reserved campsite) capacities are frequently exceeded". We do agree that this is the condition, but only along the Appalachian Trail in the Park. Otherwise, we rarely see other campers at back country sites, and almost never see an overcrowded condition other than on the AT. We feel that this is due to the popularity of the AT. During a three week period in late March/early April, almost 1600 thru hikers, on average, are in the Park headed north from Springer Mountain. This would be an average of some 75 hikers a day entering the Park and this is just far too many for the capacities along the AT in the Park. In our experience, the vast majority of these folks do not want to hike an alternate trail, they want to follow the AT. While we are sure the ATC will communicate their concerns regarding this proposal, we do want to point out that other than along the AT, we never see overcrowding conditions at back country campsites.

5. The Proposal mentions notification to campers regarding closures. Currently, signs are posted at the sites affected and at Back Country Registration Points, and we do not see that this can be changed. Almost every one of the sites in the Park can be reached by Day Hikers, and they would not be included in any "reliable system of notification" regarding this. We do not think that aggressive bear activity is limited to just campers, but day hikers, eating or passing thru affected campsites, could have an encounter. We think the Park will still have to post warnings as is currently done. In addition, campers who are already in the Park when a closure decision is made have no reliable method of being notified, since cell phones are very unreliable in the Park. If it is important that they receive this notification, then signs at the affected locations are the only way we can think of that would accomplish this. In addition, we are concerned that lesser-experienced campers might think that since they did not get any notification, that there was no problem, and be more complacent regarding food storage. We think that in a wilderness, all hikers should be aware at all times of the potential for an encounter with aggressive wildlife, and not rely on notification that an aggressive animal is in the area.

6. Regarding use of Recreation.gov, we have a number of points for consideration, but we do understand the Federal Information Processing Standards, and we do agree that using this service, since it is the one used for the Front County sites, does make the most sense if reservations are required for all sites.

The first point is that this system would be unworkable for north-bound thru hikers on the Benton MacKaye Trail. Since, like the AT, the BMT starts at Springer Mountain in Georgia, BMT thru hikers could not reliably predict exactly which date they would reach the Park. Moreover, since the BMT enters the Park at Twentymile, there is no cell phone service there, nor even a public phone, so they would have no way to contact the site, nor any feasible method of "printing" out their reservations.

Recreation.gov has a policy or limit of 4 reservations at a time. This is usually not a problem for many folks, but since each campsite would be considered a separate reservation, any trip that would stay at more than four sites would require a second reservation, with the attendant costs. This limit has to be adjusted for campers who may criss-cross the Park, or for thru hikers.

Recreation.gov has a special section for "Permits" that we feel would be much more beneficial for the intended use of the Park. Other wilderness areas issue permits for areas for date ranges, and allow camping during those dates anywhere within the designate zones, and we feel this would be a much better way to control the camping in the backcountry. In this way, quotas could be established to ensure a quality wilderness experience, but hikers would still have the ability to vary their trip, should circumstances require. There is no doubt that this would require a lot of careful preparation to set up, but we think that this would give visitors a truer wilderness experience than the "Tour Bus" approach of the proposal. We would be very willing to work with Park management to set up such an approach to limiting visitor numbers while preserving the experience.

We do understand that there would be fees associated with using such a service. While no one wants to pay in the future for something that is currently free, we realize that improvements are necessary, and we are willing to do our part. In general, we prefer a Trip, as opposed to a per night, Fee, as we feel that a per night fee might entice folks to try to shorten a trip to save money and thereby overextend themselves. Many visitors to the Park really cannot adequately foretell exactly how many miles they can hike a day, which streams might be swollen from an afternoon thunderstorm, etc. There are just too many valid reasons for a hiker to have reason to change a particular campsite site that we do not like a "you must camp here" approach. Of the payment options presented, we would prefer the "Fee per Reservation and Fee per Person" approach of Alternate "A" on the Proposal, as this would remove the temptation to over-reach to save some money. However, we do feel that a reduced fee for youth would be in order, and most feel that a fee per horse would be appropriate. The Proposal mentions three uses of the funds collected, and we agree that funding the service is a very valid use of the funds. We are less positive about increasing the presence in the Backcountry Information Office. In our experience, very few experienced hikers really use this service. While the folks there do a fairly good job regarding the major trails and campsites, we feel that the Park is simply too big for any staff to be fully versed in all the locations in the Park. A small staff to help some visitors is necessary, but in our experience, asking the staff at the distant Ranger Stations is just as good. We feel there will always be some "walk-ins", but they cannot all go to Sugarlands for advice.

We are very concerned about the Recreation.gov site policy on cancellations. If you decide to cancel a trip in order to free up space for others, they charge a \$10 for cancellations. If you need to change a reservation for any reason, that is also a \$10 fee. If you fail to tell them you need to cancel and don't show up at a reserved campsite it is a \$20 fee. I don't know how they plan to determine if someone doesn't show up, but canceling a reservation could cost more than the initial reservation itself. This seems awful burdensome to hikers to have to pay to change their reservations if they need to due to mileage, weather, or whatever.

7. The Proposal also cites as a use of funds collected "increase(d) Ranger presence in the backcountry." Given that the Proposal mentions in several spots law enforcement issues, we feel that this would fund Law Enforcement Officers in the back country, as only they could write citations (for dogs, illegal camping, etc.) By the time a person is a fully trained and equipped Law Enforcement Ranger, the Taxpayer and the National Park Service has a tremendous investment in them, and we just do not feel that, in general, use of such training to check back country permits is a good use of limited resources. We would much prefer a system of "Wilderness Rangers" or "Ridge Runners" who could, at far less cost, be in the back country more, teaching about Leave No Trace, etc., and then, using information they develop, concentrate Law Enforcement in specific areas where citations are the only answer. Given that the Park has about 77,000 visitor nights in the back country (from the Park Website), using the Fee in Alternate 3 (simply because it is the easiest to calculate), 77,000 visitor nights times \$4 per person per night gives total revenue of just over \$300,000. After paying for the Recreation.gov service and improving the Backcountry Information Office, that really leaves very little money to have any serious impact on the issues used as justification for the fees. We have no objection to a reasonable fee, but we do expect them to be used in a manner benefiting those paying the fees. This Proposal will not do this as currently presented.

8. As mentioned before, we just do not think that placing all the back country campsites on a "Reservations Required" basis is necessary, nor that it would improve the wilderness experience for hikers and campers. Other than the well-known and easily identified sites along the AT where overcrowding is an issue, most other campsites are rarely used and almost never overcrowded. We would rather help the NPS address the problem areas than take a "broad brush" approach such as that proposed.

9. The last point we wish to raise that we feel that this Proposal is a major change in the way the Park operates, and that much greater opportunity for public input and comment is needed than that afforded by two public meetings and 30 days notice. Since the Park draws from a wide area, public meetings need to be held in Asheville, Chattanooga, Knoxville, and Atlanta at a minimum, plus much greater coverage in hiker and equestrian publications, associations, etc. The Proposal gives the impression that the NPS is trying to "get something past" the users by allowing only minimal input. We feel that only by greater dissemination will this mis-impression be corrected.

***The members of the Benton MacKaye Trail Association, Inc., look forward to continuing to work with the staff of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park in improving the wilderness experience of hikers and campers in the Park. We have had a long and very productive relationship with the Park. We are very willing and anxious to provide any help or assistance that the Park may request.***

***Thank you for this opportunity to provide comments on the proposal.***

***Very respectfully,***

***Richard G. Evans  
President  
Benton MacKaye Trail Association, Inc.***



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## **Comments on Proposed Fees for Backcountry Use in Great Smoky Mountains National Park**

The time has come for a fee system to be implemented for backcountry use in Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Most popular national parks already charge such fees, and almost all national parks also charge admission fees.

We propose that ALL backcountry campsites require a reserved backcountry use permit. A reasonable fee would be about \$15.00 to \$20.00, which is in line with the backcountry use fee structure at such parks as Yellowstone and Glacier.

However, since the Great Smokies receives a lot of repeat use given population centers close by, we propose that there should be an ANNUAL FEE for frequent users. We think \$50.00 would be a reasonable annual fee.

This would be for a specified number of trips, such as maximum of ten, during the year but would still require reservations for the backcountry site.

Given the likelihood of reduced federal appropriations in the future due to our nation's large national debt and budget deficits, it only makes sense to proceed with this fee policy.

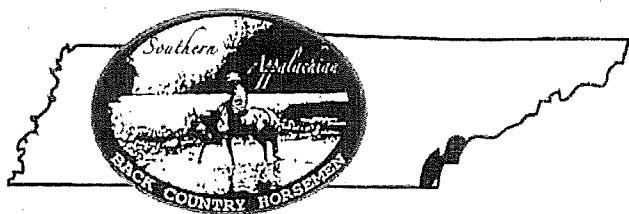
However, we only support this fee program if the NPS is aggressive in using the fees to enforce backcountry rules and regulations. If a backpacking party pays \$20.00 to reserve a backcountry campsite, that party should not go in to find a bunch of folks on foot or horseback who have not reserved the site. This is currently commonplace in the park and it is totally unacceptable.

The backcountry of Great Smoky Mountains National Park is a very special place. Visitors should expect to have a quality wilderness experience in the park's backcountry. A strong fee program with aggressive backcountry patrols and enforcement will go a long way in achieving this. We would also propose that the fees help support backcountry patrols to enforce the rules against horse parties using trails that are supposed to be for hiker use only.

---

Orville Bach, Public Lands Chair  
Tennessee Izaak Walton League  
10932 Murdock Drive  
Suite A102  
Knoxville, TN 37932





Bobby Mitchell, President  
Southern Appalachian  
Back Country Horsemen  
570 Sunnyside Road  
Sweetwater, TN 37874

August 26, 2011

Dale Ditmanson, Superintendent  
Great Smoky Mountains National Park  
107 Park Headquarters Road  
Gatlinburg, TN 37738

RE: Backcountry User Fee

We agree that the existing back country reservation system needs improvement. However, the Southern Appalachian Back Country Horsemen are not in favor of any backcountry user fee as presented on your website. The plan for the user fee appears poorly thought out process. There seems to be a feeling that utilizing the [www.recreation.gov](http://www.recreation.gov) website or implementing a computerized phone system will solve the problem. There does not seem to be any provision for physical places (hiking gear stores, camp grocery stores) to sell the permit either. It appears that it will cost more to administer the fee than the amount of fees actually brought in. According to the Appalachian Trail Thru Hikers Companion 2011, the fee for hiking without a permit is \$125 and the fine for hiking on a trail with a dog is \$500. The chance of seeing a back country law enforcement officer is negligible and many are willing to risk it. The hiring of one or two back country rangers to patrol eight hundred miles of trail per day on foot and respond to visitor emergencies is not realistic.

If the GSMNP needs money, why are they not targeting ALL users of the front and back country? One usually has to transverse the front country to get to the back country for most of the park. There are far more day users than overnight users. At the Southeastern Equestrian Conference this year, Melinda Towe (BCH-North GA) stated that there were over 9 million visitors to the Smokies last year and only about 100,000 were backcountry visitors (1/10<sup>th</sup> of 1%). Why are you targeting such a small user group?

Why was the proposed fee given only a 30 day comment period? A policy change of this magnitude would seem to have been better thought out. Your proposal needs further evaluation *and* public input. Thirty days notice is inadequate. It does not specify if this is a trial or temporary basis or a "forever" policy change. Cost of the proposed user fee varies on your website from \$10/reservation + \$5/person; \$10/reservation + \$2.25/person/night; or \$4/person/night. It does not cover length of stay or per heartbeat. Please narrow your options. There also appears to be no reduced fees for youth or even a volunteer pass. The Back Country Horsemen of America chapters put in hundreds of hours of volunteer time into the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, but that apparently means nothing to you. Per your website, GSM has 250 permanent and 100 seasonal staff. In FY 2010 there were 3,713 volunteers who donated 135,436 hours to the GSMNP. Are you going to make them pay a back country permit too? Shame. Shame. Shame.

We see the proposed backcountry user fee as a precedent that could be used by other National Parks and National Forests that need money due to budget cuts. It needs to be blanket coverage instead of targeting a small user overnight user group.

The Smokies contain several long distance trails. America's first National Scenic Trail, the Appalachian Trail enters the Smokies at Fontana Dam and exits near Davenport Gap, a distance of about 72 miles. The Benton McKaye Trail enters the park near Twentymile and exits near Big Creek, covering about 100 miles. The Mountains to Sea Trail originates from the Clingmans Dome and goes to the Oconaluftee area. Some of these trails are hiker only and some are horse/hiker trails.

The lure of a long distance trail is *that particular* trail. A thru hiker on the AT does not want to bypass the AT on a parallel trail. The *trail* is the motivation. In the spring, nearly 1,600 thru hikers enter the park. That averages out to over 75 hikers per day. They come to hike the 2,189 miles from Springer Mountain, GA to Baxter Peak on Mt Katahdin in Maine. An alternate trail just will not do. There is not a section on the entire 2,189 mile Appalachian Trail that is a toll trail which the GSMNP apparently prefers. Shame on you!

According to a 2007 park map, there are 15 total backcountry shelters of which eleven are very close, if not on the AT. There are 24 backcountry campsites that currently require reservations. Your proposal indicates that you are targeting *all* back country campsites. There are 56 backcountry campsites and five boat-in only back country campsites not normally on the reservation system. All of the backcountry sites would now be required to have a permit. At all the entrance points, there is no guaranteed cell phone or pay phone coverage to verify what nights a hiker/horseback rider will stay at a particular campsite or shelter.

We understand that fuel prices have probably dramatically decreased park visitation. That is one of many factors. Your function is to *market* the Smokies and *sell* it to the public. The proposed user fee fails in this attempt.

The intent of the 1936 legislation stipulated that there would be "no toll or license fee *ever imposed*" to travel the road which I believe included trail entrances.

Sincerely,

Bobby Mitchell  
President, Southern Appalachian Back Country Horsemen

Cc: Congressman John J. Duncan, Jr.



APPALACHIAN TRAIL  
CONSERVANCY

November 3, 2011

Clayton Jordan, Chief Ranger (via e-mail: [Clayton\\_Jordan@nps.gov](mailto:Clayton_Jordan@nps.gov))  
Great Smoky Mountains National Park  
107 Park Headquarters Drive  
Gatlinburg, TN 37738

Re: The GRSM Backcountry Office & Permit System Restructuring Proposal

Dear Ranger Jordan:

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy's Southern Region Partnership Committee (with Melissa Cobern in attendance) and Stewardship Council (with NPS A.T. Park Office staff in attendance) have discussed the *GRSM Backcountry Office & Permit System Restructuring Proposal*. As a result of those conversations we have the following comments and recommendations:

1. ATC is opposed to a permit fee for A.T. hikers, particularly A.T. thru-hikers, unless the GRSM can demonstrate with greater specificity the benefits from the permit fee to A.T. hikers and the A.T. environment and how this unprecedented A.T. permit fee system complies with directives in the *Comprehensive Plan for the Appalachian National Scenic Trail*:
  - a. "[R]eflect a sympathetic concern for the special needs of long-distance hikers";
  - b. "[F]oster an unregimented atmosphere and otherwise encourage self-reliance and respect for Trail values by users";
  - c. "Hiker regulations will be kept as unrestrictive as possible, and should be developed only to the extent they are proven necessary to protect the physical trail, its environment, and the interests of adjacent landowners"; and
  - d. "The Trail will be continuous in its marking and be open to all to walk upon it."
2. A new permit system must include flexibility for all hikers—weather and estimating problems for "normal" backpackers, and schedule unpredictability, poor access to phones or the Internet, and seasonal surges for thru-hikers are real issues which need to be dealt with constructively so as to encourage use of a new permit system and discourage circumventing the rules. For example, installing cut-and-fill campsites at A.T. shelters or other locations along the A.T. to mitigate resource damage from thru-hikers camping in excess of shelter capacity.
3. Permit fees, if any, must be structured to encourage rational planning, e.g., use a trip fee rather than a per-night fee so that campers do not overestimate their abilities in order to save money. The fee structure must be arranged so that long trips within the GRSM, including a typical five-day traverse of the whole A.T. in the Park, do not require multiple reservations/permits.
4. Consideration needs to be given to financial mitigation for those unable to pay a fee or whose use may be displaced due to the fee, e.g., some families.
5. Discussion of the most effective ways to provide additional backcountry "presence" (such as rangers or "ridgerunners"). We feel that it could be advantageous for us to work together to optimize coverage and utilization of funds, for both the Park's and ATC's programs..
6. Use Leave No Trace as a positive tool for, and possible alternative to, any new permit fee system. Perhaps A.T. thru-hikers demonstrating LNT proficiency and/or commitment would be able to pass through the Smokies without a permit fee.

7. The relationship between this proposal and use of the A.T. in the GRSM by outfitters needs to be carefully examined.
8. Discussion is needed of the relationship between the permit fees and the necessary annual work on the A.T. done and funding provided by Smoky Mountains Hiking Club volunteers, ATC volunteers and staff, and projects funded by the NPS Appalachian Trail Park Office.
9. We continue to be concerned about the precedent that a GRSM permit fee will set for other agencies along the A.T. This proposal would produce the only location on the A.T. that requires a fee, a reservation and staying in a designated site.

Despite the public comment period on this proposal having ended, there is a formal agreement among ATC, the Smoky Mountains Hiking Club, GRSM and ATPO that requires consultation and cooperation. ATC's involvement is more than mere (for lack of a better term) public comment, as can be seen in this excerpt from the MOU:

"That it is the intent of this Memorandum of Understanding that all Partners shall be consulted on any proposed activities that might affect the resources enjoyed by the A.T. users. All Partners shall be involved in identifying problems related to proposed activities affecting the Appalachian Trail corridor in GRSM—analyzing available data, obtaining needed data, determining range of solutions and providing recommendations to GRSM to implement. GRSM will select the alternative with the least impact to the A.T. whenever possible. Meetings to discuss proposed activities in the A.T. corridor may be called by any Partner as required."

In the spirit of that long-standing MOU that seeks to involve all partners in A.T. decision-making, ATC is prepared to discuss these comments and recommendations with GRSM staff and work with you to find win/win solutions for improved GRSM customer service, backcountry resource concerns and appropriate accommodation of long-distance hikers. We also feel that a "park to park" meeting between APPA & GRSM is in order regarding this proposal. We look forward to these discussions and to helping you craft a well-designed system.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide additional input to this proposal and for your continued interest in the appropriate stewardship of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail.



Morgan Sommerville  
Regional Director  
Appalachian Trail Conservancy  
160A Zillicoa Street  
Asheville, NC 28801

cc (via e-mail):

Superintendent Pamela Underhill, APPA  
Superintendent Dale Diltmanson, GRSM  
Bob Almand, Chair, ATC Board of Directors  
Edward Fleming, President, Smoky Mountains Hiking Club  
Brian Fitzgerald, Chair, ATC Stewardship Council  
Philip Royer, Chair, ATC SORO Regional Partnership Committee



# ipetitions

YOUR VOICE COUNTS

This petition has collected  
458 signatures  
using the online tools at iPetitions.com

Printed on 09-14-2011

458  
entries

Sent from:  
Adam Beal  
2941 Country Meadows Lane  
Maryville, TN 37803

# Say 'No' to Backcountry Camping Fees in the GSMNP

## About the petition

We, the undersigned, stand in opposition to the 'Backcountry Office & Permit System Restructuring Proposal' submitted by the Great Smoky Mountains National Park (GSMNP). Under this proposal, the GSMNP would charge fees for the use of backcountry campsites.

Our opposition comprises the following concerns:

- \* NPS-provided data demonstrates that backcountry use in the GSMNP has significantly declined from a peak approximately 15 years ago.
- \* The assignment of fees to backcountry users irresponsibly targets the group of individuals who are most likely to protect the Park and its resources, yet fails to address the significant damage to the Park wrought by frontcountry visitors.
- \* It is unlikely that all funds raised under the proposal would, in practice, actually find their way to "improve on those experiences that people have in the backcountry".
- \* In extremely difficult financial times for many individuals and families, the Park's timing for this proposal is unseasonable and will induce financial hardships on some of its finest current and future stewards.

**And perhaps most importantly,**

- \* The GSMNP is prohibited from the charging of an entrance fee under deed restrictions imposed at the time of the Park's formation. We are concerned that enacting a fee for the use of the backcountry violates the spirit of the original Park agreement, which was to provide a resource ***'for the permanent enjoyment of the people'***.

## Signatures

1. Name: Anonymous on Aug 18, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina

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2. Name: Jim Casada on Aug 18, 2011  
Comments: This fee initiative is a travesty. It needs to be stopped in its sorry tracks.  
In what state do you reside: Other

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3. Name: Robert E White on Aug 18, 2011  
Comments: No to fees. Hire one more Ranger or one more office person. Operate back country office 8-5, Mon-Fri. No to privatizing the parks. No to contracting Ranger jobs. No to "only those who can afford it" get to visit the back country sites. Close some of the little used and hardly used NPS historic sites and hire more Rangers. No to pay for view publicly owned parks. I can't believe other parks would do this. It's a terrible idea. Writing my elected officials and the president.  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina

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4. Name: Ann Casada on Aug 18, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other

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5. Name: Many Waters on Aug 18, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other

---

6. Name: W.M.Willis on Aug 18, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other

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7. Name: Doug Hancock on Aug 18, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other

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8. Name: David Vitti on Aug 18, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other

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9. Name: Matt Gilliam on Aug 18, 2011  
Comments: The backpackers are the people who love the park and do the most for the park. It's the car riders that take and take and take and never give anything back.  
In what state do you reside: Other

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10. Name: Charles Duke on Aug 18, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee

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11. Name: Adam Beal on Aug 18, 2011  
Comments: This hurts frequent users of the park the most. The GSMNP officials need more than these two meetings on this proposal. I am very much against it.  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee

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12. Name: Dr. Philip Dwyer on Aug 18, 2011  
Comments: No service provided by forced revenues could possibly be worth the restrictions imposed on Americans and our guests who travel in the wilderness to seek freedom from such buracracy.  
In what state do you reside: Other

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13. Name: Anonymous on Aug 18, 2011  
Comments: test  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
14. Name: Daryl Cox on Aug 18, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee
- 
15. Name: Lonnie L. Dockery on Aug 18, 2011  
Comments: This seems to be a no-brainer. People who use the back country are people who are trying to get away from people and the effects of people-however temporarily. We do not need to have the experience "enhanced" by rangers or anyone else. Furthermore, it is ludicrous to attempt to raise money from a handful of people when there are hoards using the facilities in the park which are easily accessible. Charge them fees if you want to raise money. Leave the rest of to enjoy what the founders of the park intended us to enjoy. Our fee is our effort.  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina
- 
16. Name: Caryn Canfield on Aug 18, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee
- 
17. Name: Joanna Swanson on Aug 18, 2011  
Comments: We need adequate funding from the government to take care of our parks! Charging for enjoyment of public lands is a sad state of affairs. I know it may be unavoidable, but it makes my heart sad.  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
18. Name: Kenneth M. Roper on Aug 18, 2011  
Comments: There should be no charge for camping in our Great Smokey Mountains Park. Remember the original agreement!!!  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina
- 
19. Name: Matthew Timbs on Aug 18, 2011  
Comments: I am not in favor of charging fees for backcountry permits.  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee
- 
20. Name: Kerry L. Sumners on Aug 18, 2011  
Comments: I am against the charges for backcountry camping and or the proposed reservation system.  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee
- 
21. Name: Tipper Pressley on Aug 18, 2011  
Comments: I am agaisnt the proposed backcountry camping fees.  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina
- 
22. Name: Carolyn W. Davidson on Aug 18, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina
- 
23. Name: Sarah Casada on Aug 18, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee
- 
24. Name: Annette Hensley on Aug 18, 2011  
Comments: This would be one more totally wrong move made by the park!  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
25. Name: Don Casada on Aug 18, 2011  
Comments: My backcountry experience would NOT be enhanced by a couple of rangers wandering the trails. More trail maintenance workers to repair horse-damaged or otherwise problematic trail sections? Yes. Rangers in the front country who would actually enforce noise laws that they currently ignore (e.g., motorcycles can be heard on Hughes Ridge, 5 miles from US441) - absolutely.



In what state do you reside: North Carolina

- 
26. Name: Amanda Beal on Aug 18, 2011  
Comments: I'm concerned about the appropriation of these fees and whether they will truly be used to improve the backcountry. I also feel this proposal unfairly targets a rather small segment of campers who are among those who love and care for the park the most.  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee
- 
27. Name: Scott Wood on Aug 18, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee
- 
28. Name: Anonymous on Aug 18, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
29. Name: Justin Heckman on Aug 18, 2011  
Comments: As an avid camper, I would be limited in my overnight stays in the park if there are fees added. Keep in mind, the more fees government adds to activities or life styles, the less money there is to go to other things. I would probably cut out camping all together if fees are going to be involved for backcountry sites or if rates are increased for frontcountry sites.  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee
- 
30. Name: Brooke Esch on Aug 18, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee
- 
31. Name: Kevin Guerra on Aug 18, 2011  
Comments: Why not charge the horsemen a 15.00 entrance fee the seem to be the ones putting the most impact on the park and its trails.  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee
- 
32. Name: David R. Knapp on Aug 18, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee
- 
33. Name: Kenneth Walker on Aug 18, 2011  
Comments: No money to be made on this idea, charge a users fee to enter cades cove for some big bucks.  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee
- 
34. Name: Mike Niemeyer on Aug 18, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee
- 
35. Name: Sue E. Niemeyer on Aug 18, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee
- 
36. Name: Fred Turner on Aug 18, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee
- 
37. Name: Susan Smith on Aug 18, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee
- 
38. Name: George Phoenix on Aug 18, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other
-

39. Name: Tara Jean Melendez on Aug 19, 2011  
Comments: I use this area often and it is much appreciated to find a place such as this to enjoy without cost; especially in the economy we live in today. I also know the work it takes to keep such an area maintained and guarded. I help in the aid of preservation by volunteering efforts which are available to me. Please keep this area a cost-free one!  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina
- 
40. Name: George Ensley on Aug 19, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina
- 
41. Name: Lawrence Hyatt on Aug 19, 2011  
Comments: One more broken promise  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee
- 
42. Name: Jeff Clinedinst on Aug 19, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
43. Name: Carl lobst on Aug 19, 2011  
Comments: Forget it! My people contributed to buy land for this park. It's our land and you're going to charge us to use it?  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina
- 
44. Name: Nathan Biggs on Aug 19, 2011  
Comments: I wholeheartedly agree with the above statements.  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee
- 
45. Name: Jennifer Ericson on Aug 19, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee
- 
46. Name: Ellen Monteith on Aug 19, 2011  
Comments: I am opposed to charging fees to be able to camp in the back country of the great smoky mountain national park. This is only a foot in the door, the first step toward wilderness designation. How much more do we have to give before the park says enough????  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina
- 
47. Name: Chris McCall on Aug 19, 2011  
Comments: Prohibit horses within the GSMNP if you want to improve the backcountry experience. They destroy trails, attract annoying insects, smell hideous, and leave you-know-what everywhere they go.  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee
- 
48. Name: C. D. Welch on Aug 19, 2011  
Comments: Wouldn't object if the money were used to maintain trails and campsites.  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina
- 
49. Name: Dale And Linda Hogue on Aug 19, 2011  
Comments: We do NOT need a fee to camp in backcountry. Is this a first in a list of fees to be imposed gradually for use of "the people's park"?  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina
- 
50. Name: William Burnett on Aug 19, 2011  
Comments: Just another type of taxation, Park Employees work for the citizens yet they act like they own the Parks especially those in administration..The Smokies belong to the People just like everything else owned by the US Government. Our hired caretakers would do well to remember this.  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina
- 
51. Name: Sam Ridge on Aug 19, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina

- 
52. Name: Anonymous on Aug 19, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee
- 
53. Name: David Lee on Aug 19, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee
- 
54. Name: Michell Monteit Spurgeon Hollis on Aug 19, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
55. Name: Michell Monteith Spurgeon Hollis on Aug 19, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
56. Name: M. A. Herron on Aug 19, 2011  
Comments: Tax for utilizing our own property.  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina
- 
57. Name: Kevin J. Hoffman on Aug 19, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
58. Name: Aileen McCoy on Aug 19, 2011  
Comments: no one should have to pay for this privilege.  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
59. Name: David Grimm on Aug 19, 2011  
Comments: Additionally, the cost involved with collecting this fee and patrolling to ensure compliance, would like be more significant than the revenue received by this change in policy.  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
60. Name: Anonymous on Aug 19, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee
- 
61. Name: Nathan Duncan on Aug 19, 2011  
Comments: I have a couple of thoughts on this feel free to agree/disagree as you see fit:

1.) The park was created out of families homesteads to a great extent, and many of these families had been there for generations. Part of their compensation for giving up (whether by choice or force) the lands that had been part of their families heritage for generations is that the government would never charge a fee for access to these lands. That is a promise that must be kept. Think about what TVA did in Tellico Village... Took farms away from families who had been there for years, and then didn't use the land for what they claimed they would when they took by eminent domain, and they sold it developers. The Army corps engineers did the same thing in PA with a proposed dam that never got built - families uprooted and then the land turned over to developers. I know it is not exactly the same thing, but the government needs to be held accountable and held to their promises.

2.) They are promising two back country rangers with the increased revenue. How often does the government ask for a 'small fee' to offset they cost of some common good ... like schools, roads, etc and then the money doesn't end up going where they promised... Think wheel tax in Knox county.

3.) Where is the line? Next are we going to charge a fee to hike the trails? Day hikers and day users of the park contribute much more to the problem than back country campers. People throw trsh out of their car windows, so how about a fee for driving a car through the park. Horse use causes damage to trails that require work to regrade and fix to mitigate erosion, so we need a fee for taking a horse into the park. People that float down the river in tubes also leave trash and things behind, so there needs to a water use fee. How about a fee for using the park for commercial purposes - tubing companies, guided hikes, guided fishing and camping trips? These people make money off a free resource, maybe some time in the future the NPS will decide that they need to pay their fair share. No matter what fee they come up with, they will have have more things that they need money more and never enough money to do it, so I don't think that supposed benefits of this proposal come close to the cost - both financially and morally.

4.) There are enough responsibly minded people in the backcountry that why couldn't most of what they want to do be done on a volunteer basis? Who wouldn't volunteer to take some sort of training/orientation from a head ranger and get certified to do some sort of back country enforcement. How many time have you gone out to back country site and seen it trashed? Did you clean it up? You weren't there to see the people trash it, and even with two rangers dedicated to 104 backcountry sites and shelters, if you are lucky, each site will get visited by a backcountry ranger what, once a month, if that. How much difference will that actually make? Why not give private, trained citizen volunteers the authority to check permits, take ID info, report infractions to a enforcement ranger who could write citations and mail them to offenders? The volunteers would provide a written account, photographs, etc. Or even if enforcement is not the push, how about "back country angels" people who photograph the sites they visit, report on trash, food, bear activity, or whatever is wrong or good about the site, and clean the site up as best they can and then have some sort of system in place where we can report our experiences directly to the park service (maybe a webpage or something) and have the reports posted online on the park's webpage to raise awareness.

I think that one important thing to consider, just throwing more money at a problem won't make it go away. It seems like a small fee, for people who don't regularly use back country, but to people that do, the cost of doing lots of trips will add up fast. And a number of those of us that use it frequently are the type of people who cherish the park and clean up the trash left behind by the reckless ones. If it becomes expensive to get away to the park, you may find more and more campsites that have bear problems, trash problems etc, because the people who have been leaving the place better than they found it are now spending their time in the back country of the national forest instead.

In what state do you reside: Tennessee

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62. Name: Anonymous on Aug 19, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee

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63. Name: Jo Jackson on Aug 19, 2011  
Comments: With fees we won't be able to visit as often.  
Keep it FREE!!!  
In what state do you reside: Other

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64. Name: Christine C. Proctor on Aug 19, 2011  
Comments: No Camping Fees  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina

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65. Name: Tom Helms on Aug 19, 2011  
Comments: Parents and grandparents gave pennies, a much as they could, to help pay for this park. Were told no entrance fees!  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina

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66. Name: Doug Sutherland on Aug 19, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee

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67. Name: Tom Lundberg on Aug 19, 2011  
Comments: I donate time and \$\$ to protect the park, and have for years. I have considered this to be a fair and equitable entrance and use fee. Many people adhere to this practice and feel the same way. If you hit me in my pocketbook, I'll target other areas such as Cherokee NF, Pisgah and Nantahala NF's, as well as state, concervancy and private lands with my efforts. The gsmnp will see less of me, and gsmnp will be the loser.  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee

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68. Name: Bill Mackert on Aug 19, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee

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69. Name: Pam Fitzpatrick on Aug 19, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other

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70. Name: Brandon White on Aug 19, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee

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71. Name: Walter Isenberg on Aug 19, 2011

Comments: I attending the Thursday night meeting, and I do not agree with a need to enact fees for backcountry use. My experience with the current system with no fees has always been more than adequate. Adding fees would just make me visit the park less.  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee

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72. Name: Aaron Cruze on Aug 19, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee

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73. Name: Frank Umbdenstock on Aug 19, 2011  
Comments: remember the original agreement  
In what state do you reside: Other

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74. Name: Carol Cochran-Melanson on Aug 19, 2011  
Comments: Absolutely NO to such thoughts as charging for back-country permits. The Park is a resource for the "Enjoyment of the People";  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina

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75. Name: Jim Spencer on Aug 19, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other

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76. Name: Anonymous on Aug 19, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee

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77. Name: Anonymous on Aug 19, 2011  
Comments: Not fair to charge backpackers when car riders go free.  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee

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78. Name: Michael D. Wingert on Aug 19, 2011  
Comments: It would be a logistical nightmare for thru-hikers of the AT. The GSMNP would then be thought of just like the AMC as a bunch of money grabbers for little or nothing in return.  
In what state do you reside: Other

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79. Name: Sean Canaway on Aug 19, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee

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80. Name: Jill J Easton on Aug 19, 2011  
Comments: There are some sacreds in this world and the sound of pine trees in the breeze of a mountain top is one of them. The few folks who are willing to hike the distances to get to these spots should not be charged.  
In what state do you reside: Other

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81. Name: Liz Coykendall on Aug 19, 2011  
Comments: One group should not be targeted. Charge one, charge all.  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina

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82. Name: Donald E. Davidson on Aug 19, 2011  
Comments: own homes in NC and GA  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina

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83. Name: Wade Bourne on Aug 19, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee

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84. Name: Tes Jolly on Aug 19, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other

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85. Name: Joey Bridges on Aug 19, 2011  
Comments: they propose a fee to fund a service that they already have the funding for. if they choose to spend it on paving and visitor centers etc.... then we shouldn't be double taxed to fund a website and two more rangers.  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee
- 
86. Name: Larry M. Proffitt on Aug 19, 2011  
Comments: I think the charging of these fees is a bad idea .  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee
- 
87. Name: Rob Simbeck on Aug 19, 2011  
Comments: I am a user of the park and an outdoor writer. I strenuously object to the thought of fees like those you are proposing.  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee
- 
88. Name: Jimmy Jacobs on Aug 19, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
89. Name: Jay Langston on Aug 19, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee
- 
90. Name: Tom Dillon on Aug 19, 2011  
Comments: What about making US 441 a toll road instead?  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina
- 
91. Name: Cody Miller on Aug 19, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee
- 
92. Name: Doug Markham on Aug 19, 2011  
Comments: Isn't this really a tax that our elected folks don't have to defend? I oppose it. We already pay for our park system.  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee
- 
93. Name: Lane Herron on Aug 19, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina
- 
94. Name: Alvin Burt on Aug 19, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee
- 
95. Name: Buddy Barksdale on Aug 19, 2011  
Comments: "for the permanent enjoyment of the people"...no fees attached.  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
96. Name: Jim Adams on Aug 19, 2011  
Comments: taxes should already cover cost but don't due to poor government.  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
97. Name: Shari Wilkins on Aug 19, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
98. Name: John Wood on Aug 19, 2011  
Comments: The proposed fee system unfairly targets a small group of overnight hikers who create very little impact to the Park. Why do you not charge for driving the Cades Cove loop, parking at Clingman's Dome, docking of boats, riding of horses, etc? All these activities require considerably more manpower and have greater impact.  
In what state do you reside: Other
-

99. Name: Cherie Jones on Aug 19, 2011  
Comments: It's getting ridiculous  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina

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100. Name: John Quillen on Aug 19, 2011  
Comments: This is a tax on backcountry use and a violation of the parks deed restriction. Ditmanson is augmenting his already bloated budget on the backs of those who fight for it and protect it. He got 64 million extra dollars this year in stimulus money but I suppose road building is more important. 8 x his annual budget and he wants to dig deeper into backpacker pockets. Unbelievable. Email the natl pard director, ditmanson's boss. He has the ultimate say so.  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee

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101. Name: Anonymous on Aug 19, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other

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102. Name: Johnnie Estes on Aug 19, 2011  
Comments: I was born and raised in the Great Smokey Mountains and the idea of charging to camp there has got to be the highlight of GREED. Don't do it people as it will never be worth it. I presently live in Texas but Western North Carolina will always be my home.  
In what state do you reside: Other

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103. Name: W. A. McCollum on Aug 19, 2011  
Comments: NO FEES -keep the agreement  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina

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104. Name: R. Neil Wright on Aug 20, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other

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105. Name: Rene Williams on Aug 20, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other

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106. Name: Steph on Aug 20, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other

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107. Name: Guy Tribo on Aug 20, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee

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108. Name: Eric Graves on Aug 20, 2011  
Comments: No park entrance fees! we have something special here. why in the world do we want to be like the rest of the parks in America!  
The problem with fees is--enough is never enough!  
At first they will fix all the trails and do a lot of good with the money; fix many things that need fixing. Then they will start building crap and bringing civilization more and more into the back country. Do we really want to see a plexiglass observation deck cantilevered off Charles Bunion? Or outhouses at Campsite 90 and the Sithenge rock circle on the lake bottom dismantled and a keep off sign posted at the edge of the lake bed? Do we really want the road over Cataloochee paved?  
Is this what we want for the wild and beautiful backcountry of the GSMNP? Because if this fee system goes into effect--that's ultimately what we are looking at. Civilizing the wild places of the park to make it more tourist friendly! The thought of it just sickens me!  
Keep the Smoky's wild and beautiful and above all-- FREE!  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee

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109. Name: Michael J McMurray on Aug 20, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee

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110. Name: Kathryn Kranitzky on Aug 20, 2011  
Comments:

In what state do you reside: Tennessee

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111. Name: Missy Hall on Aug 20, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee

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112. Name: Leslie Berez on Aug 20, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee

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113. Name: Rebecca Goodson on Aug 20, 2011  
Comments: A fee to camp in the backcountry is ridiculous. I don't understand paying to rough it in the first place but as an avid thru-hiker this does not make sense on so many levels. I would go on but I will just keep it short and to-the-point.  
In what state do you reside: Other

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114. Name: Martin Hunley on Aug 20, 2011  
Comments:  
No to backcountry fee.

I have backpacked more than 600 miles of our lovely GSMNP and never have seen the need for this action. I made myself informed and through friends made our trips enjoyable. However, I have seen a lot of damage to the trails especially during wet seasons and to a few campsites due to the horse traffic.... I say this is the area you may want to look into. I really would hate to see our free park come to this. I am in New York right now, and from what I see up here with these type of charges to their park system, toll roads, toll bridges, and etc..... It never stops.

I am writing to express my opposition to the proposed backcountry reservation fee system. This represents nothing more than a tax on backcountry use. A fraction of the stimulus money which was misappropriated to repair horse damaged trails could solve this problem as it would only take two employees answering phones that are NOT volunteers to take the strain off good folks who donate their time. It makes me reconsider any volunteer work I may do in the future when I see park leadership engage in fee grabbing at the expense of the one group that cares most for this natural resource. Therefore, I wish to have my position clearly marked in the NO category with regard to this proposed backcountry fee.  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee

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115. Name: Owen Schroeder on Aug 20, 2011  
Comments: This is stupid.  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee

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116. Name: David Monteith --Swain County Commissioner on Aug 20, 2011  
Comments: I opposed the NP charging for back country camping. Swain County has given enough, it is time for us to be on the receiving end. When the NP was established we were told no charge to enter, the NP will try to charge Cemetery visit if this passes we have to stop this DOA. no charge  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina

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117. Name: Anonymous on Aug 20, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee

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118. Name: Matthew Wade Roach on Aug 20, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee

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119. Name: Lawrence Lane on Aug 20, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other

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120. Name: Frank E. Fry III on Aug 20, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other

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121. Name: Brenda Burnett on Aug 20, 2011



Comments:  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina

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122. Name: Kim Welch on Aug 20, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other

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123. Name: L. Perry Fuqua on Aug 20, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee

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124. Name: David Cummings on Aug 20, 2011  
Comments: NO NO NO  
In what state do you reside: Other

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125. Name: Richard H Simms on Aug 20, 2011  
Comments: The Park Service is historically forbidden from collecting entrance fees in the Great Smokies based on its original agreement with the State of Tenn. and North Carolina in acquiring the land. This appears to be a method to circumvent that agreement. IF passed, residents of Tennessee and North Carolina should be exempt from any additional fees for any use of the Park.  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee

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126. Name: Shawn Barco on Aug 20, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other

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127. Name: Kathy Butt on Aug 20, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee

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128. Name: Jacqueline Whittemore on Aug 20, 2011  
Comments: I would encourage other petitionees to also send emails or letters directly to the backcountry office, to your state senators, local representatives, and related activity/interest groups (like hiking clubs you belong to). Every action adds to the momentum and each takes just a few minutes. If you write everyone, you still haven't spent the time it takes to hike in to Ramsay Cascades! :)  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee

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129. Name: Tom Adkinson on Aug 20, 2011  
Comments: I know GSMNP needs revenue, but this isn't the way. The most persuasive argument against this fee is that the would-be payers already are the most likely future stewards of the park. We must find legitimate ways to elicit more voluntary contributions from the masses, perhaps a huge and sustained campaign to donate to Friends of the Smokies.  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee

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130. Name: Susan Lauten on Aug 20, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee

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131. Name: Jim Duckworth on Aug 20, 2011  
Comments: The law says no fees shall be collected, follow the laws. We are losing outdoor men and families and by doing this you will loose more which means less hunting, fishing and camping equipment sales and sales tax.  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee

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132. Name: Duke Turnage on Aug 20, 2011  
Comments: Come on guys, really?  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee

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133. Name: Michael Thorpe on Aug 20, 2011  
Comments: Terms of this petition pretty well say what needs to be said!  
In what state do you reside: Other

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134. Name: Andrew John MacDonald on Aug 20, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee

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135. Name: Jonathan Wright on Aug 20, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside:

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136. Name: James Locke on Aug 20, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee

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137. Name: John Gallaspy on Aug 20, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee

---

138. Name: Charlie Clampitt on Aug 20, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other

---

139. Name: Natasha Getway on Aug 20, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina

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140. Name: Eric Getway on Aug 20, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina

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141. Name: Ashlyn Getway on Aug 20, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina

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142. Name: Janet Dalton on Aug 20, 2011  
Comments: I am against backcountry fees.  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee

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143. Name: Paul Rose on Aug 20, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina

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144. Name: Gwen Franks Breese on Aug 20, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina

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145. Name: Robert H. Breese Jr on Aug 20, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina

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146. Name: Janice Halpern on Aug 21, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee

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147. Name: Mark A Pentecost on Aug 21, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other

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148. Name: Amy H on Aug 21, 2011  
Comments: No fees for a couple reasons for me: 1. it goes against the original agreements and would be a slap in the face to all those families displaced to form the park that so many enjoy today. 2. once people start paying fees a certain sense of entitlement

creeps in and i think that would prove to be the undoing of the beauty that we all love so much.  
In what state do you reside: Other

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149. Name: Kenneth Gourley on Aug 21, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee

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150. Name: Sharon Long on Aug 21, 2011  
Comments: please no fees.  
In what state do you reside: Other

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151. Name: Patrick H. Roberson on Aug 21, 2011  
Comments: In my short life time, I have never taken opportunity to enjoy the back country of the Great Smokey Mountian National Park. However looking back at my family history I quickly realize how that freedoms that I once enjoyed on property once owned by my grandfather has now become off limits to myself and family as land ownership has changed. Another Grandfather owned a vast amount of acreage that now if in the Fall Creek Falls State Park. Now not only my family can enjoy my grandfathers land but any one who choses to do do. It would be a criminal act of treason, in my opion, to see the American people having to pay rent so to speak to enjoy something that they already own. The back country has not recieved any improvements that has burdened the taxpayers of our nation so why should they have to pay a tax without representation?  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee

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152. Name: Rex Edmonds on Aug 21, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina

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153. Name: Jean Davis on Aug 21, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina

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154. Name: Doug Revis on Aug 21, 2011  
Comments: Let people enjoy this without a fee. We give alot to help the park. If you start to charge, the money will stop .  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina

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155. Name: Clark Allison on Aug 21, 2011  
Comments: this constitutes an entrance fee!! bad!!  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee

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156. Name: BOB & BECKY CARROLL on Aug 21, 2011  
Comments: NO FEES FOR BACKWOOD CAMPING  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina

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157. Name: Mike Marsh on Aug 21, 2011  
Comments: I am opposed to charging a fee to backcountry campers at Great Smoky Mountains National Park  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina

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158. Name: Eric Rollins on Aug 21, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina

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159. Name: William Howe on Aug 21, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee

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160. Name: David Gunter on Aug 21, 2011  
Comments: no fee  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina

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161. Name: Johnathan Dodd on Aug 21, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee

- 
162. Name: David Morgan on Aug 22, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee
- 
163. Name: Caleb Boyle on Aug 22, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina
- 
164. Name: Jenny White Howe on Aug 22, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside:
- 
165. Name: Christopher Daniel on Aug 22, 2011  
Comments: In my experience the current back country reservation system for GSMNP works satisfactorily. I will use the park substantially less if the fees are added. To much of the new fee is slated to go simply for the reservation system contractor and related fee collection/enforcement efforts  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
166. Name: Robert Stufflebeam on Aug 22, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
167. Name: Phillip Stiles on Aug 22, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina
- 
168. Name: Polly Dean on Aug 22, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside:
- 
169. Name: Joshua Vaughn on Aug 22, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
170. Name: Billy Knight on Aug 22, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina
- 
171. Name: Gaynell Thomas on Aug 22, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee
- 
172. Name: Sandra Tritt on Aug 22, 2011  
Comments: Lotta people gave that land for almost nothing, to be enjoyed for future generations. In these economy, there's not a whole lot you can afford to do with the family. Please don't screw this up. Thank You.  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee
- 
173. Name: Sandra Tritt on Aug 22, 2011  
Comments: Lotta people gave that land for almost nothing, to be enjoyed for future generations. In these economy, there's not a whole lot you can afford to do with the family. Please don't screw this up. Thank You.  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee
- 
174. Name: J. Martin on Aug 22, 2011  
Comments: It is absurd to think that frontcountry/car users should get the most resources allocated to their overseeing and enforcement and not pay a SINGLE penny to enjoy the park - while backcountry users would have to PAY a potentially hefty charge to get the same overseeing and enforcement. Actually, it would be a TINY tiny minor percentage of enforcement as compared. Really an unfair proposal.  
Taking away one more chance for a human being to just go be a human being somewhere alone out in the (local) world without having to pay somebody.

In what state do you reside:

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175. Name: Tom Langston on Aug 22, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee

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176. Name: Ben Bacot on Aug 22, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee

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177. Name: George E Hailey, Jr on Aug 22, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee

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178. Name: Jeff Kehoe on Aug 22, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina

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179. Name: Darrin Breeden on Aug 22, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee

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180. Name: Barbara Fortner on Aug 22, 2011  
Comments: The Great Smoky Mtn. Nat'l. Park was not build to charge anything for back-county and/or anything else.  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina

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181. Name: Dwayne Allen on Aug 22, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee

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182. Name: David Skidmore on Aug 22, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside:

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183. Name: Michael E. Smith Jr. on Aug 22, 2011  
Comments: You had an agreement, stick to it! No entrance fees!  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee

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184. Name: Mary V. Cook on Aug 22, 2011  
Comments: I am against charging for back country camping  
or any other charges to the public for use of the  
Great Smoky Mt. National Park. We have given enough. My family had to move out of the North Shore when the tva dam was built.  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina

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185. Name: Wade Cook on Aug 22, 2011  
Comments: I am against charging any fee for the public to use the GSMNP. Our families had to move from our homes on the North  
Shore of Fontana Lake, when TVA built the Dam. We have given enough.  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina

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186. Name: Reona DeHart on Aug 22, 2011  
Comments: I am against charging a fee to camp in the back country. They have taken our homes, land and way of life, it is time the  
park gives back to our people in Swain County and to the North Carolina side of the GSMNP.  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina

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187. Name: Jesse Ditzer on Aug 22, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina

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188. Name: William Alexander on Aug 22, 2011

Comments: This proposal represents an unfair tax on the people who care most about the park. The primary reason more rangers will be needed is to police the new rules and collect fines. And, as with all taxes, the fees will only increase over time. The time to stop this is now! Call or email your representatives in Congress ASAP!!  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee

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189. Name: Wilma Stephenson on Aug 22, 2011  
Comments: What else r they going to do?????????  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina

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190. Name: Daniel Gobich on Aug 23, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee

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191. Name: Rob Davis on Aug 23, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee

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192. Name: Donald Norton on Aug 23, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee

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193. Name: Jonathan Duckett on Aug 23, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee

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194. Name: Veronica Egan on Aug 23, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other

---

195. Name: Elizabeth Johns on Aug 23, 2011  
Comments: I am opposed to the fee at this time. At some point fees may be necessary to maintain the Park. Also, I see a fee for maintenance / upgrading of back country sites and potentially other fees for specific purposes as different from a general Entrance Fee.  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina

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196. Name: Betty Lou Jenkins on Aug 23, 2011  
Comments: My feelings are stated in the above paragraph &quot;for the permanent enjoyment of the people&quot;. Talked with the GSMNP re: tubing fees and was told the original agreement prohibited a fee. Same should be for everyone!

In what state do you reside: North Carolina

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197. Name: James Majors on Aug 23, 2011  
Comments: Bad idea!!!  
In what state do you reside: Other

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198. Name: Rose Chilcoat on Aug 23, 2011  
Comments: Agencies should be removing obstacles that prevent people of all ages and incomes from getting out and experiencing their public lands, especially in areas showing decreased use and visitation.  
In what state do you reside: Other

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199. Name: Joyce Hurley on Aug 23, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina

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200. Name: Justin Lashley on Aug 24, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other

- 
201. Name: Tim Hembree on Aug 24, 2011  
Comments: My great grandmothers land was taken for little more than these proposed fees. The promise she got was her offspring would never be charged to visit these lands. This is the result of letting outsiders (Ditmanson & former directors) call the shots. Backcountry today....Cemeteries tomorrow?  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee
- 
202. Name: George Royster on Aug 24, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee
- 
203. Name: Ron Chambers on Aug 24, 2011  
Comments: leave well enough alone  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee
- 
204. Name: Henry Chambers on Aug 24, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
205. Name: Tim Hall on Aug 24, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina
- 
206. Name: Anonymous on Aug 24, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina
- 
207. Name: Tye Reece on Aug 24, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
208. Name: Tom Hoffman on Aug 24, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
209. Name: Mike Briggs on Aug 24, 2011  
Comments: I agree with this stewardship of the trail. Let me provide volunteer work in the park on my way through rather than pay a fee.  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
210. Name: Shelda Calhoun on Aug 24, 2011  
Comments: All our freedoms are slowing being taken away. A little here, a little there and before we are aware we will not be able to set foot on land our ancestors farmed and called home. There is not thought to what the people who live here and use this land for recreation, take it all away and no-one will be able to use it for anything  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina
- 
211. Name: Tracy Watt on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments: I say NO to Backcountry Camping Fees in the GSMNP!  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
212. Name: Ross Kelley on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside:
- 
213. Name: Glenn W. Wheeler on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
214. Name: John Reed on Aug 25, 2011

Comments: no fees  
In what state do you reside: Other

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215. Name: Ed Jekot SR on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other

---

216. Name: Craig Peak on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee

---

217. Name: Jason & Rachelle Clark on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments: NO NO NO NO NO  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina

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218. Name: Charles R. Robbins, Jr. on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other

---

219. Name: Dennis Palmer on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments: FDR said "For the permanent enjoyment of the people" and he ment it !  
In what state do you reside: Other

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220. Name: Fred Creighton on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments: Another sign of Government gone wild.  
In what state do you reside: Other

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221. Name: David Kettleson on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other

---

222. Name: Anonymous on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments: Please do not place fees on the people of the USA.  
In what state do you reside: Other

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223. Name: Ronald Bennett on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other

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224. Name: Anonymous on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other

---

225. Name: Deanna Lee Travis on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments: Let's keep the government out of our parks!  
In what state do you reside: Other

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226. Name: Bill Robinson on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments: No more Government fees to use the National Parks back country!  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee

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227. Name: Shirley Parker on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other

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228. Name: Amy Grisak on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other

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229. Name: Peggy Lambert on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments: I do not agree with what you are trying to do. Charge people!!! You cheated them out of their land once. Like the Gov. did to the Cherokee and my people are the Cherokee.  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina
- 
230. Name: Paula Rhodarmer on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments: Please do not charge fees for use of backcountry campsites.  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina
- 
231. Name: Neal Travis on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee
- 
232. Name: Wanda Walsh Daniele on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
233. Name: Wanda Walsh Daniele on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
234. Name: Frank on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee
- 
235. Name: Britt Rowe on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments: get & keep the government off our back & out of our pockets  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
236. Name: Jerry Vincent Parker on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments: these funds will never make it to the backcountry... i'm very disappointed in the way they have spent the funds they already have...  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina
- 
237. Name: Bob Reid on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments: I was born in the Smoky Mountains of east Tennessee nearly 74 years ago, and have returned regularly since then. My brother died while hiking there, and his ashes are now a part of the Park. Please do not discourage the popularity of this national treasure by charging a fee to enjoy it. thanks. --b.  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
238. Name: Don S. Williamson on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments: As mentioned above the National Park System was not set up originally as a means to take money out of the public's pocket. We already pay taxes.  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina
- 
239. Name: Sheila Barron on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
240. Name: Robert St John on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
241. Name: Leon Clark on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments: Please reconsider your position of implementing backcountry fees for the park. Find another way to increase revenues or better still - reduce administrative costs.  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina
- 
242. Name: Jim Estes on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments:

In what state do you reside: North Carolina

- 
243. Name: Raymond G Frowd on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee
- 
244. Name: Michael Pearson on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
245. Name: Floyd F. Deiss Jr. on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments: Probably if you start charging a fee to use the park, you will end up with a lower &quot;user&quot; status. Besides from the begining it was stated there would never be a &quot;user fee&quot; To bad money trys to ruin and rule everything today!  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
246. Name: William Lawrence on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments: if this allowed to happen its just the beginning of what will follow  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
247. Name: Gary Boone on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments: I.v visited the GSMNP several times over the years and fully support tis petition.  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
248. Name: Henry Dowling on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments: less throwing money at problems, more use of volunteers and non-profits  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina
- 
249. Name: Charles Mitchell Lee on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments: Please keep this treasure free and accessible to those who cherish it.  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
250. Name: John Teague on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments: Leave All Parks Free  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina
- 
251. Name: Jim Curl on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments: I do not agree that a fee is required to use land that already belongs to Americans.  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
252. Name: Ann Parton on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments: I very strongly oppose back country fees.  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina
- 
253. Name: Steve Alberts on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments: The petition presents a logical argument AGAINST back country fees. Please do not install a fee structure of this gift to the American people.  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee
- 
254. Name: Sam Austin on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
255. Name: Kirk Franklin on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina
- 
256. Name: Elizabeth on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina

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257. Name: Micheal Volino on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other

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258. Name: Dwight Pearson on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other

---

259. Name: Sheila Davis on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina

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260. Name: Scott Bartlett on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina

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261. Name: Earl K. Pierce JR. on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other

---

262. Name: William Marshall on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments: Keep the back country free of fees as promised.  
In what state do you reside: Other

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263. Name: Jack Land on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments: I support this petition 100 %  
In what state do you reside: Other

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264. Name: Susie Hendrix on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside:

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265. Name: Louis P. Batson III on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments: Please don't abandon the intent of the original park agreement.  
In what state do you reside: Other

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266. Name: Danny Redman on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina

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267. Name: Jeff Ayers on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina

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268. Name: Sydney Jenkins on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments: I say NO for the following reasons (written by someone else but I'm in full agreement):  
Never mind that there has never been a charge in the 76 years of the Park's existence.

Never mind that shortly after the Park was established a promise was made that there would never be access fees for use of the Park.

Never mind that the Park's own statistics show backcountry camping is in decline and has been so since the mid-1990s.

Never mind that this comes at a time of straitened economic circumstances for many.

Never mind that we are at a point in our nation's history when we need more youngsters and young people being encouraged to take to the woods, as opposed to facing financial and logistical barriers to do so.

Never mind that the Park has long been guilty of salutary neglect of the backcountry.

Never mind that those who regularly use the backcountry are some of the finest stewards of the Smokies.

Never mind that millions of dollars (your taxpayer dollars) in "stimulus" funds went to the Park as part of the Obama administration's TARP program.

In what state do you reside: North Carolina

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269. Name: John Greene on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other

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270. Name: Bill McCurry on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina

---

271. Name: Joe Penland on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee

---

272. Name: Bill McCurry on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina

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273. Name: Lonnie Dockery on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments: For various reasons, throughout my life I have found myself having very little disposable income. That has never caused me a lot of concern because I knew that within reach was the greatest source of entertainment and contentment I could hope for. I could roam through woods and sleep on top of a mountain--free, anytime I wished in the GSM National Park. There must be hundreds of others like me whose ancestors gave up farms and homeplaces and who because we can roam at will, feel that maybe giving up the land without a fight was justified. But be assured that will not happen a second time.  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina

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274. Name: Jim Wick on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other

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275. Name: PK Davis on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments: It was to ALWAYS be free!  
In what state do you reside: Other

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276. Name: Terry Corder on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other

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277. Name: Andy Robbins on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments: I have camped and fished the backcountry for years -- there is enough intrusion in the frontcountry!! Leave the backcountry alone!! We backcountry hikers/fishermen/campers watch out for the park and respect the land....and we certainly do not need another fee-based system to worry about!!  
In what state do you reside: Other

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278. Name: Brent Cater on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside:

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279. Name: Cliff Shelby on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments: And this is supposed to further the common good? How ridiculous.  
In what state do you reside: Other

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280. Name: Charles Harrell on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments: Don't break your promises.  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina

- 
281. Name: Bion Schouten on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments: This is a disgrace to our heritage, and what we instituted the park to be in the first place! Let's find out who in the Park Service initiated this, and see they are given an early retirement incentive....  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
282. Name: Jeanette Willis on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
283. Name: Charles Snodgrass on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments: Why pick on campers? If you must charge anyone, find a way to charge the thru-traffic drivers who never get out of their car  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina
- 
284. Name: Thad Lineberger on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments: The national parks in the USA are a treasure for all of us to hold for as long as possible. We all know that the parks have fallen on hard times. Not enough money to maintain and repair as is necessary.  
  
I am fully in favor of charging fees to visit these parks. However, it isn't right to single out campers for such fees.  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina
- 
285. Name: Sterling Brothers on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
286. Name: Michael Harrison on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments: Don't do it!!! There is enough government waste that needs to be eliminated and some of this waste could fund whatever monies you think you "need".  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
287. Name: Robert Dale on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
288. Name: Jefferson S. Kindrick on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments: The proposed backcountry fee is indeed a travesty and in direct contradiction to what the GSMNP stands for. NO!  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee
- 
289. Name: Raymond Von Drehle on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments: To secure the future of the park, we need to encourage more people to experience it. Fees would only discourage this. If people haven't experienced it, they are less likely to care one way or another about its future. I oppose fees primarily for this reason.  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina
- 
290. Name: Bill Hensel Aka Bamboo Bill on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments: I spent four lovely days up on Deep Creek in 1999. I live in Colorado where a man is still free to hike in the wilderness with no fee. It saddens me to think that you easterners are going to take that away from the special people who love the wilderness and wildness that is found in the Smokey Mountain Park. People like you are why I moved out to Colorado when I was 20 years of age from the East Coast and I'm 59 years old today.  
  
This is the beginning of the end.  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
291. Name: Rick Berry on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina
- 
292. Name: Kevin Lane on Aug 25, 2011

Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee

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293. Name: Linda Woodyer on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments: Illinois  
In what state do you reside: Other

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294. Name: Darrell Thomas on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina

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295. Name: David Horn on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other

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296. Name: Philip Hyre on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other

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297. Name: John E. Robbins on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments: Although I have not journeyed into the back country of The Great Smokey Mountains National Park, I can appreciate the concerns of those who initiated this petition, and I agree, it is an unconscionable act by the NPS and GSMNP to even consider such a fee. I am in total opposition to such a fee.  
In what state do you reside: Other

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298. Name: Anonymous on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments: I am local and concerned about this goign to call congressman duncan i think  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee

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299. Name: Rohn Stearns on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other

---

300. Name: Gary Powell on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other

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301. Name: Anonymous on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments: I am fully in support of this petition  
In what state do you reside: Other

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302. Name: Erica Gooding on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other

---

303. Name: Lee Anne Austin on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other

---

304. Name: Matt Gunter, DVM on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other

---

305. Name: Jo Ellen Cline on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments: This is, yet another examples of our government breaking its promises! It is my hope that everyone in the boardering states and counties to whom this promise was made, will sign this petition!  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina

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306. Name: Jerry Ledford on Aug 25, 2011

Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other

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307. Name: Anonymous on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee

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308. Name: Don Guillory on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments: Where is the Freedom that we live and die for everyday for in this great nation. I want a place of Trees, Lakes, Rivers calm and quite where anyone can go and don't have to worry about a fee to enjoy it!  
In what state do you reside: Other

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309. Name: John Mischle on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other

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310. Name: Anonymous on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments: The GSMNP is really trying to take from the residents of Swain County. First taking all the old artifacts to TN and now this. When will it end. Maybe we should ask the federal park service to give the 43 percent of the park back to Swain County.  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina

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311. Name: Judith F. Johnson on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments: I hope and pray this petition is successful!!!!  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina

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312. Name: Keith Everson on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other

---

313. Name: Matt Heil on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina

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314. Name: Stan Beck on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina

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315. Name: Michael Ramsey on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina

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316. Name: Chris Abbott on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments: No fees for Smokey Mountain backcountry usage.  
In what state do you reside: Other

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317. Name: Joe Driver on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other

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318. Name: Ronald D. Weddle on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside:

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319. Name: Gary Payeur on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments: I believe it's a god given right to enjoy the outdoors and nature, a right you should not be charged for.  
In what state do you reside: Other

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320. Name: David Timmerman on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments: No fees for backcountry camping

In what state do you reside: Other

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321. Name: Richard Hilborn on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other

---

322. Name: Doug Berg on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina

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323. Name: Diann W. Ball on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina

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324. Name: Walt Mizelle on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments: No fees except if a reservation system is established like previous years.  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina

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325. Name: Harley Babb on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other

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326. Name: Roy Owens on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other

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327. Name: Rolland Stokes on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments: I am against the fees, it just doesn't make sense. i would recommend high fines for littering or damaging the area.  
In what state do you reside: Other

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328. Name: James H. Graham on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments: This is an intrusion on the peoples right to enjoy the park.  
In what state do you reside: Other

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329. Name: Lisa Snuggs on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina

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330. Name: Chet Kedzierski on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other

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331. Name: Julie A. Wilson on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other

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332. Name: Anonymous on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other

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333. Name: David Hollingsworth on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other

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334. Name: Jay L. Hodgin on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other

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335. Name: Jeff Tipton on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina
- 
336. Name: Douglas Lamb on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
337. Name: Camperpat on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
338. Name: Anonymous on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina
- 
339. Name: Jeane Camp on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments: No to fees  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
340. Name: Bo Curtis on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments: When you raise enough money, you can put a fence around them and keep everyone out.  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee
- 
341. Name: Jimmy Redding on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments: This Socialist Government has no right to run our lives.They have turned over the national parks along the Texas border to mexican drug smugglers,but take no action to solve this problem.They only seem to care about fees and higher taxes.  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
342. Name: Bobby Eugene Kirkland on Aug 25, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina
- 
343. Name: Bill Corder on Aug 26, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
344. Name: Thom Galas on Aug 26, 2011  
Comments: SC resident. Got a real need, like trail maintenance, ok ... &quot;back country fees&quot; for what ?  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
345. Name: Larry Simonds on Aug 26, 2011  
Comments: Why charge such a small minority of users of the GSMNP, who has such a small impact on its environment. Also the local people surrounding the park who were promised there would never be a charge for its use. Should the GSMNP be allowed to break another promise?  
In what state do you reside:
- 
346. Name: Seth O'Shields on Aug 26, 2011  
Comments: Being a member of a family that was forcefully removed from the Sugarlands I feel nothing but disappointment for this proposal  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina
- 
347. Name: Thomas R. Harding on Aug 26, 2011  
Comments: A deed restriction is legally binding. Forget about it.  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina
- 
348. Name: Eric Pritchett on Aug 26, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other

- 
349. Name: Ethan S on Aug 26, 2011  
Comments: YOU AIN'T TAKIN OUR LAND!  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina
- 
350. Name: Ronald Glover on Aug 26, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina
- 
351. Name: Lee Selman on Aug 26, 2011  
Comments: Definitely opposed as this against the spirit under which the park was established.  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
352. Name: Michael Janicki on Aug 26, 2011  
Comments: ...and that government of the People, by the People, and for the People...  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
353. Name: Roanald K May on Aug 26, 2011  
Comments: I do not support fees to camp or use the back country of the Smokies National Park.  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
354. Name: Ron May on Aug 26, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
355. Name: Vincent Daugherty on Aug 26, 2011  
Comments: I do not agree to back country fees or any fee for access to the Smokies, I grew up running in and around the park and still visit at least twice a month.  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee
- 
356. Name: Rick Shortt on Aug 26, 2011  
Comments: There should be no enforced monetary fee to enjoy wilderness. Perhaps a voluntary donation, strictly for backcountry rehabilitation and trail work, for the park collected in only, might be a good idea.  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
357. Name: Betty Jean Hartsell on Aug 26, 2011  
Comments: Quit breaking the promises that were made to the people when the park was made.  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina
- 
358. Name: David Gingrich on Aug 26, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina
- 
359. Name: Michael Dulay on Aug 26, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
360. Name: Reed Kidd on Aug 26, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
361. Name: Alyssa Farmer on Aug 26, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
362. Name: Ernie Joyner on Aug 26, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee
-

363. Name: Dawn Cory on Aug 26, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
364. Name: Alesia O'Shields on Aug 26, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee
- 
365. Name: Anonymous on Aug 26, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee
- 
366. Name: Alesia O'Shields on Aug 26, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee
- 
367. Name: Jerry Estes on Aug 26, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina
- 
368. Name: Lynn Chambers on Aug 26, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
369. Name: Shirley Clontz on Aug 26, 2011  
Comments: the Smokys should always be open to the enjoyment of the people of the US.  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina
- 
370. Name: Chuck Hunt on Aug 26, 2011  
Comments: Listen for a change  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
371. Name: Chris Boesel on Aug 26, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
372. Name: Sharon Henson on Aug 26, 2011  
Comments: The park should remain free of entrance fees...as originally intended &quot;for the enjoyment of the public&quot;  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
373. Name: Ken Sholter on Aug 26, 2011  
Comments: Quit feeding off of greed, and let the original intent of the Park's program take care of itself. Keep the govt. out of the beautiful forests, lest they destroy them also.  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
374. Name: William Marvin on Aug 26, 2011  
Comments: this is just WRONG. no more taxes of any kind  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
375. Name: Bob Fulcher on Aug 26, 2011  
Comments: no fees  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
376. Name: Shane Ashby on Aug 26, 2011  
Comments: I am not completely opposed to a fee for backcountry camping as long as it is low and the revenue generated is used to maintain trails, shelters, etc.  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
377. Name: Katherine Cochran Oxendine on Aug 26, 2011

Comments: our fathers and forefathers helped to build these parks for everyone's enjoyment. Please honor their devotion and hard work and the people who gave the land  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina

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378. Name: John Cutts on Aug 26, 2011  
Comments: unconscionable to do this. only a ploy to disguise a tax.  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina

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379. Name: F. Hammond Cole Jr MD on Aug 27, 2011  
Comments: This seems to add an additional layer of bureaucracy to what should be a simple process.  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee

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380. Name: Anonymous on Aug 27, 2011  
Comments: Been in Smoky backcountry often, including this week, and have never even seen another camper at a site. I leave no trace and pack out any trash I find. In the past I was frontcountry and needed a ranger but station was locked up with an ETA of 2-3 hrs. Don't need services and none are provided in backcountry. Usually take short trips around work last minute, not months in advance planned on the computer. Keep it the way it is.  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee

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381. Name: Susan Brooks on Aug 27, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina

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382. Name: Patsy Gowen on Aug 27, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other

---

383. Name: Sean Ansley on Aug 27, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other

---

384. Name: Jack Thomas on Aug 27, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina

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385. Name: Barbara Hunter on Aug 28, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other

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386. Name: Blair Hyder on Aug 28, 2011  
Comments: Why should back country campers have to pay a fee when the majority of USFS campsites in the area that are vehicle accessible are not fee driven this seems crazy. I doubt seriously NPS will gain much revenue if a fee were imposed; if it is money NPS is after increase the camping fees for front country camping. I fished Forney Creek 7/4/10 (a holiday weekend) and encountered exactly 5 people on the creek, two were also fishing and 3 were hiking. None of the campsites along the creek were being used that day.  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina

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387. Name: Jay Moss on Aug 28, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina

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388. Name: JAMES EVANS on Aug 28, 2011  
Comments: BAD IDEA THESE FEES, KEEP THINGS AS THEY ARE.  
In what state do you reside: Other

---

389. Name: Kenneth Walker on Aug 28, 2011  
Comments: Shame, shame, shame, shame!  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee

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390. Name: Jimmy Bennett on Aug 28, 2011

Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other

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391. Name: Craig Lawhorne on Aug 28, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other

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392. Name: Gerald Ledford on Aug 28, 2011  
Comments: rockefeller said his donation of land "would be free to the American people"!!!  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina

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393. Name: JEFFREY D LITTLE on Aug 28, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina

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394. Name: Charles Early on Aug 28, 2011  
Comments: Ignoring deed restrictions is illegal and might negate the very existence of the park.  
In what state do you reside: Other

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395. Name: Shawn Basil on Aug 28, 2011  
Comments: I have donated money and volunteer hours to trail maintenance in the Park many times. I have used the current phone reservation system, and, while a bit slow at times, it works. I also often plan trips to sites that require no reservation. I have NEVER found crowding at these sites despite what promoters of this system espouse. The only crowding has been at Appalachian Trail shelters. I am VERY concerned that this system will greatly complicate local users ability to backpack in the park, punish hikers unfairly, and open the door to a host of new charges to users of a park that was designed to be free for the use of the people.

Most unfortunately, the described system will do NOTHING to improve the backcountry, its trails, or its campsite. This fee is a bureaucratic charge for an unnecessary system to pay for itself. Please DO NOT enact this plan.

In what state do you reside: Tennessee

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396. Name: Jamie Wilkinson on Aug 28, 2011  
Comments: NO FEE!!!  
In what state do you reside: Other

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397. Name: Mark R Hall on Aug 29, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee

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398. Name: Ken Parnell on Aug 29, 2011  
Comments: stop your wasteful spending our money to begin with and you won't have to burden us to death with another tax  
In what state do you reside: Other

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399. Name: Daniel Biffert on Aug 29, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina

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400. Name: Chase Shaver on Aug 29, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee

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401. Name: Douglas Alton Bledsoe on Aug 29, 2011  
Comments: There was a promise to never charge fees for back country camping. Please keep it.  
In what state do you reside: Other

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402. Name: Carl lobst on Aug 29, 2011  
Comments: This whole idea is atrocious. Somebody is spending too much time behind a desk figuring out ways to tax us on the sly. It is highly likely that if you attempt to implement this travesty of a regulation the whole system will collapse and it will be every camper for themselves. Keep people out of the back country and on the roads. It will make it much easier to control visitation won't it?  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina

- 
403. Name: Steve Claxton on Aug 29, 2011  
Comments: The group of individuals that I am most concerned about imposing a charge for are the youth who live around the borders of the national park that use these backcountry sites as their backyard recreational opportunities. Swain and Graham Counties are both poverty stricken. In working with the 2,000 students in the Swain County School System I know hundreds of kids and their families that simply could not afford the proposed backcountry fees. As a youth growing up camping in the park I feel this would be taking a very valuable asset away from our local youngsters. These same youth and their families who live in poverty also do not own a credit or debit card, especially during these difficult economic times. What alternative do they have to pay if they ARE able to scrape up enough money for a family outing in the backcountry? I want these local youngsters to have the same memorable experiences that I had growing up in one of God's most precious places on earth, the backcountry of the Great Smoky Mountains.  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina
- 
404. Name: Mitch Groothuis on Aug 29, 2011  
Comments: The young generation doesn't need yet another barrier keeping them from enjoying the outdoors! Put up a donation box at the outlet mall in Pigeon Forge and you'll make more money!  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee
- 
405. Name: Craig Holt on Aug 29, 2011  
Comments: This proposal violates not only the spirit of the agreement that created the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, but its actual legal language.  
If NPS is considering ways to increase income, it could violate the agreement in a way that would make more sense to the public by creating a "user fee"; most citizens probably would agree to pay -- a \$5 annual fee to access the park that could be made available and payable on-line, by writing or visiting a GSMNP or ranger office. Upon receipt of the \$5, the NPS could issue a card suited for swiping at entry gates (with parking-deck-like gate arms) that would swing up and open the park to one car per swipe. The NPS also could establish "lifetime" swipe cards (\$100) whose principle could be put into an interest-accruing account to generate future park funds. The major expense would be paying for the automated gates at park entrances, but incomes generated the first year likely would pay for them. Then there'd have to be a paid, full-time repairman's position for the park to fix gates that become broken or disabled.  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina
- 
406. Name: Brent Haney on Aug 29, 2011  
Comments: The park was only given over on the basis it would be free. this goes against those original agreements made!  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee
- 
407. Name: Tom Dean on Aug 29, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
408. Name: John Harrell on Aug 29, 2011  
Comments: NO more TAX  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee
- 
409. Name: Theodore D.Maczuga on Aug 29, 2011  
Comments: Do You belong to the Tea Party or what-We all know that back country camping has been on the decline so why and I stree are you even considering a fee for the use of what Mother Nature has so abundantly provided for all of us to enjoy so freely. God and the Cherokee as well as others of us out here are asking that you seriously reconsider your assinie idea of a fee-lean back on a starry in the mountains and observe what the Lord has given us at NO CHARGE!  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
410. Name: Phil Rothermel on Aug 30, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
411. Name: Mike Conaway on Aug 30, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
412. Name: Gary Garth on Aug 30, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other
-

413. Name: Chris Clabough on Aug 30, 2011  
Comments: I am opposed to charging fees to be able to camp in the back country of the great smoky mountain national park.  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee
- 
414. Name: Michael Herschbach on Aug 30, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
415. Name: R Henson on Aug 31, 2011  
Comments: No to park fees.  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina
- 
416. Name: Bamboo Bob on Aug 31, 2011  
Comments: This is just the first step. Eventually the entire AT and PCT and other back country areas will require a permit to hike and a fee to camp. Inevitable result of moving from volunteers to "professionals" in the back country.  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
417. Name: Andy Jordan on Aug 31, 2011  
Comments: The GSMNP is prohibited from the charging of an entrance fee under deed restrictions imposed at the time of the Park's formation. We are concerned that enacting a fee for the use of the backcountry violates the spirit of the original Park agreement, which was to provide a resource 'for the permanent enjoyment of the people'.  
  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
418. Name: Mikell C. Peed on Aug 31, 2011  
Comments: I am adamantly opposed to any kind of access fee!!!  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
419. Name: Wayne Hipkins on Sep 01, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
420. Name: Anonymous on Sep 01, 2011  
Comments: The great thing about GSMNP is the free access and the beauty it provides. Please keep it this way!!  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
421. Name: George Kratzschmar on Sep 01, 2011  
Comments: Do not charge fee.  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
422. Name: Lawrence Sokolowski on Sep 01, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
423. Name: Alan Clemons on Sep 01, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
424. Name: Larry Rhodarmer on Sep 02, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina
- 
425. Name: Jen Russell on Sep 03, 2011  
Comments: This proposal would penalize those whose major goals are to preserve and protect the environment. It also appears to violate the purpose of GSMNP as a citizens' resource.  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
426. Name: Freya Erickson on Sep 04, 2011  
Comments:

In what state do you reside: Other

- 
427. Name: William Klostermeyer on Sep 04, 2011  
Comments: Please reconsider, enough interference into wild places that are ours to enjoy!  
In what state do you reside: Other
- 
428. Name: James L. Goodson on Sep 05, 2011  
Comments: If you start charging fees, no one will volunteer to fight forest fires.  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina
- 
429. Name: Sam Davis on Sep 05, 2011  
Comments: Do not agree with park service reasons.  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina
- 
430. Name: Gerald LaVallee on Sep 05, 2011  
Comments: No additional fees for backcountry use.  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee
- 
431. Name: Ray Payne on Sep 05, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee
- 
432. Name: Anonymous on Sep 05, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee
- 
433. Name: Anonymous on Sep 05, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee
- 
434. Name: David Ammons on Sep 08, 2011  
Comments: I believe that if backpackers are going to be required to pay a campsite usage fee, horseback riders should also be charged a trail usage fee, they do far more damage to the GSMNP trails than backpackers. Ideally there should be no fee for campsites at all, but a fee for trail shelters would be acceptable.  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee
- 
435. Name: David McGhee on Sep 08, 2011  
Comments: Organize what you already have instead of waste more! I have lived in sight of the GSMNP for 45 years. I spend every weekend I can on the trail. We remove more back country garbage than any Glock totin ranger would ever think about. To work for the feds you have to constantly waste so you can appear to need more.  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee
- 
436. Name: Adolph Brack on Sep 09, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina
- 
437. Name: Greg Lobas on Sep 09, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina
- 
438. Name: Wayne Davis on Sep 09, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee
- 
439. Name: Darlene Allen on Sep 09, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee
- 
440. Name: Clark Allison on Sep 09, 2011



Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee

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441. Name: Don Batten, 215 Harley Dr, Knoxville, TN 37919 on Sep 09, 2011  
Comments: To say the least, I'm NOT happy with this proposal. Hear me out!

1. There was not enough time allowed nor opportunities convenient to users with jobs in the surrounding metropolitan areas for public comment provided. The public meetings were held at park sites, during the week at times that made it difficult for working people to attend.
2. The problems cited are not that significant, do not occur that often, and are usually resolved amongst the campers, that is unless you are a guide service. Those most in support seem to have commercial interests and having too many at a site hurts business.
3. 2 bc rangers will not stop the "problems, only perm camp hosts might and that's absurd.
4. No provisions to exempt AT through hikers or others who cannot make it to their reserved site.
6. No cost estimate provided for the extra staff and the online reservation system and no estimate of the revenue expected. The fee system is disproportionate to the required services. I have friends who like to backpack probably 30 to 40 times per year. I used to do the same a few years ago and hope to do again. \$300 to \$400 per year is not reasonable.
7. No yearly pass system has been proposed at a reasonable cost.
8. The fees collected will be used elsewhere such as providing front side services, not for backcountry improvements or services.
9. The proposal invites backcountry rangers to stop and question, and perhaps search anyone, anywhere, especially if they are carrying a pack that looks bigger than a small day pack.
10. The proposal does not address how violators will be handled. Will violators be detained at the camp site or anywhere else that the ranger deems there has been a violation.
11. Adding the less popular backcountry sites to a required reservation system is not needed.

'Nough said for now.  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee

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442. Name: Paige Russell on Sep 09, 2011  
Comments: I am a leader in Boy Scouts of America and a teacher of Leave No Trace principles to youth. It is an unnecessary burden on those who have the most respect for the condition of the park to impose such fees. Stop the madness!  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina

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443. Name: Martin Hunley on Sep 09, 2011  
Comments: I live at the time in New York with a home in Knox County.  
No to backcountry fee.

I have backpacked more than 600 miles of our lovely GSMNP and never have seen the need for this action. I made myself informed and through friends made our trips enjoyable. However, I have seen a lot of damage to the trails especially during wet seasons and to a few campsites due to the horse traffic.... I say this is the area you may want to look into. I really would hate to see our free park come to this. I am in New York right now, and from what I see up here with these type of charges to their park system, toll roads, toll bridges, and etc..... It never stops.

I am writing to express my opposition to the proposed backcountry reservation fee system. This represents nothing more than a tax on backcountry use. A fraction of the stimulus money which was misappropriated to repair horse damaged trails could solve this problem as it would only take two employees answering phones that are NOT volunteers to take the strain off good folks who donate their time. It makes me reconsider any volunteer work I may do in the future when I see park leadership engage in fee grabbing at the expense of the one group that cares most for this natural resource. Therefore, I wish to have my position clearly marked in the NO category with regard to this proposed backcountry fee.

In what state do you reside: Other

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444. Name: Rick E. Brown on Sep 09, 2011  
Comments: I spent all my youth in the backcountry of the Smokies and have ancestors buried there, are they going to charge us next to visit their graves?  
In what state do you reside: Other

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445. Name: Ben Clary on Sep 09, 2011

Comments:

In what state do you reside: Other

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446. Name: George Willis on Sep 09, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside:

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447. Name: George Willis on Sep 09, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other

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448. Name: Deb Stevenson on Sep 10, 2011  
Comments: I am shocked that this preposterous idea would even be considered!  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee

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449. Name: Bobby Dunnivant on Sep 10, 2011  
Comments: This is the only Federal Park that is free and lets keep it that way  
In what state do you reside: Tennessee

---

450. Name: William N. Starnes, Jr on Sep 10, 2011  
Comments: I strongly oppose backcountry fees. I have not noticed any real NPS effort in &quot;maintaining the backcountry&quot;  
nor do I believe any fees will go to anything but administration.  
In what state do you reside: Other

---

451. Name: JEFF KISER on Sep 11, 2011  
Comments:  
In what state do you reside: Other

---

452. Name: James C Kidd Jr. on Sep 11, 2011  
Comments: Unless these fees are returned directly to the mgt of backcountry sites - I am opposed to them. I have no doubt that they  
will go to the treasury to be wasted as most other funds are. This is a very poor idea and one generated by the upper mgt to  
generate additional funds that will not be used in the park.  
In what state do you reside: Other

---

453. Name: Danny Harvey on Sep 12, 2011  
Comments: We need to be helping people get outdoors, not pricing away from it.  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina

---

454. Name: John G Willis on Sep 12, 2011  
Comments: no fees please  
In what state do you reside: Other

---

455. Name: Keith Brown on Sep 12, 2011  
Comments: again, another move to punish the responsible for the negligence of the irresponsible. has anyone considered how  
much is actually done to help maintain such sites by those who are being responsible OR how much more costs may be were it not  
for them? why alienate them to the point that you do not even have that resource?  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina

---

456. Name: Gloria Wallace on Sep 13, 2011  
Comments: This is not fair to through hikers or those who have volunteered to maintain trails and camps. The land was donated to  
the park service stating that no fees would be charged to those using the park.  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina

---

457. Name: Gloria Wallace on Sep 13, 2011  
Comments: This is not fair to through hikers or those who have volunteered to maintain trails and camps. The land was donated to  
the park service stating that no fees would be charged to those using the park.  
In what state do you reside: North Carolina

---

458. Name: Randall Smith on Sep 13, 2011  
Comments:

In what state do you reside: Other

---



Morgan Sommerville  
<[msommerville@appalachiantrail.org](mailto:msommerville@appalachiantrail.org)>  
11/04/2011 10:09 AM

To: [Melissa\\_Cobern@nps.gov](mailto:Melissa_Cobern@nps.gov)

cc

bcc

Subject: Fwd: ATC Comments: GRSM Backcountry Office & Permit System Restructuring Proposal

History:

✉ This message has been forwarded.

Hi, Melissa. This went out yesterday.

Morgan Sommerville  
Regional Director  
Appalachian Trail Conservancy  
160A Zillicoa Street  
Asheville, NC 28801  
Phone: 828.254.3708 x12  
Mobile: 828.551.4873  
Fax: 828.254.3754  
[msommerville@appalachiantrail.org](mailto:msommerville@appalachiantrail.org)  
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The Appalachian Trail Conservancy's mission is to preserve and manage the Appalachian Trail – ensuring that its vast natural beauty and priceless cultural heritage can be shared and enjoyed today, tomorrow, and for centuries to come. To become a member, volunteer, or learn more, visit [www.appalachiantrail.org](http://www.appalachiantrail.org).

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Susan Daniels** <[sdaniels@appalachiantrail.org](mailto:sdaniels@appalachiantrail.org)>  
Date: Thu, Nov 3, 2011 at 3:22 PM  
Subject: ATC Comments: GRSM Backcountry Office & Permit System Restructuring Proposal  
To: [Clayton\\_Jordan@nps.gov](mailto:Clayton_Jordan@nps.gov)  
Cc: [Dale\\_Ditmanson@nps.gov](mailto:Dale_Ditmanson@nps.gov), [Pamela\\_Underhill@nps.gov](mailto:Pamela_Underhill@nps.gov), [jrobertalmand@gmail.com](mailto:jrobertalmand@gmail.com), [edwrdfm@aol.com](mailto:edwrdfm@aol.com), "Brian T. Fitzgerald" <[fitzgerald@madriver.com](mailto:fitzgerald@madriver.com)>, Philip Royer <[philip.royer@asgarch.com](mailto:philip.royer@asgarch.com)>, Morgan Sommerville <[msommerville@appalachiantrail.org](mailto:msommerville@appalachiantrail.org)>

This message is being sent in behalf of ATC Southern Regional Director Morgan Sommerville. The Appalachian Trail Conservancy's comments on the GRSM Backcountry Office & Permit System Restructuring Proposal are attached

Susan Daniels  
Conservation Coordinator  
Appalachian Trail Conservancy  
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Harpers Ferry, WV 25425-0807  
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ATC Comments GRSM Permit Restructuring.pdf



November 3, 2011

Clayton Jordan, Chief Ranger (via e-mail: [Clayton\\_Jordan@nps.gov](mailto:Clayton_Jordan@nps.gov))  
Great Smoky Mountains National Park  
107 Park Headquarters Drive  
Gatlinburg, TN 37738

Re: The GRSM Backcountry Office & Permit System Restructuring Proposal

Dear Ranger Jordan:

The Appalachian Trail Conservancy's Southern Region Partnership Committee (with Melissa Cobern in attendance) and Stewardship Council (with NPS A.T. Park Office staff in attendance) have discussed the *GRSM Backcountry Office & Permit System Restructuring Proposal*. As a result of those conversations we have the following comments and recommendations:

1. ATC is opposed to a permit fee for A.T. hikers, particularly A.T. thru-hikers, unless the GRSM can demonstrate with greater specificity the benefits from the permit fee to A.T. hikers and the A.T. environment and how this unprecedented A.T. permit fee system complies with directives in the *Comprehensive Plan for the Appalachian National Scenic Trail*:
  - a. "[R]eflect a sympathetic concern for the special needs of long-distance hikers";
  - b. "[F]oster an unregimented atmosphere and otherwise encourage self-reliance and respect for Trail values by users";
  - c. "Hiker regulations will be kept as unrestrictive as possible, and should be developed only to the extent they are proven necessary to protect the physical trail, its environment, and the interests of adjacent landowners"; and
  - d. "The Trail will be continuous in its marking and be open to all to walk upon it."
2. A new permit system must include flexibility for all hikers—weather and estimating problems for "normal" backpackers, and schedule unpredictability, poor access to phones or the Internet, and seasonal surges for thru-hikers are real issues which need to be dealt with constructively so as to encourage use of a new permit system and discourage circumventing the rules. For example, installing cut-and-fill campsites at A.T. shelters or other locations along the A.T. to mitigate resource damage from thru-hikers camping in excess of shelter capacity.
3. Permit fees, if any, must be structured to encourage rational planning, e.g., use a trip fee rather than a per-night fee so that campers do not overestimate their abilities in order to save money. The fee structure must be arranged so that long trips within the GRSM, including a typical five-day traverse of the whole A.T. in the Park, do not require multiple reservations/permits.
4. Consideration needs to be given to financial mitigation for those unable to pay a fee or whose use may be displaced due to the fee, e.g., some families.
5. Discussion of the most effective ways to provide additional backcountry "presence" (such as rangers or "ridgerunners"). We feel that it could be advantageous for us to work together to optimize coverage and utilization of funds, for both the Park's and ATC's programs..
6. Use Leave No Trace as a positive tool for, and possible alternative to, any new permit fee system. Perhaps A.T. thru-hikers demonstrating LNT proficiency and/or commitment would be able to pass through the Smokies without a permit fee.

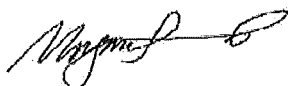
7. The relationship between this proposal and use of the A.T. in the GRSM by outfitters needs to be carefully examined.
8. Discussion is needed of the relationship between the permit fees and the necessary annual work on the A.T. done and funding provided by Smoky Mountains Hiking Club volunteers, ATC volunteers and staff, and projects funded by the NPS Appalachian Trail Park Office.
9. We continue to be concerned about the precedent that a GRSM permit fee will set for other agencies along the A.T. This proposal would produce the only location on the A.T. that requires a fee, a reservation and staying in a designated site.

Despite the public comment period on this proposal having ended, there is a formal agreement among ATC, the Smoky Mountains Hiking Club, GRSM and ATPO that requires consultation and cooperation. ATC's involvement is more than mere (for lack of a better term) public comment, as can be seen in this excerpt from the MOU:

"That it is the intent of this Memorandum of Understanding that all Partners shall be consulted on any proposed activities that might affect the resources enjoyed by the A.T. users. All Partners shall be involved in identifying problems related to proposed activities affecting the Appalachian Trail corridor in GRSM—analyzing available data, obtaining needed data, determining range of solutions and providing recommendations to GRSM to implement. GRSM will select the alternative with the least impact to the A.T. whenever possible. Meetings to discuss proposed activities in the A.T. corridor may be called by any Partner as required."

In the spirit of that long-standing MOU that seeks to involve all partners in A.T. decision-making, ATC is prepared to discuss these comments and recommendations with GRSM staff and work with you to find win/win solutions for improved GRSM customer service, backcountry resource concerns and appropriate accommodation of long-distance hikers. We also feel that a "park to park" meeting between APPA & GRSM is in order regarding this proposal. We look forward to these discussions and to helping you craft a well-designed system.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide additional input to this proposal and for your continued interest in the appropriate stewardship of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail.



Morgan Sommerville  
Regional Director  
Appalachian Trail Conservancy  
160A Zillicoa Street  
Asheville, NC 28801

cc (via e-mail):

Superintendent Pamela Underhill, APPA  
Superintendent Dale Ditmanson, GRSM  
Bob Almand, Chair, ATC Board of Directors  
Edward Fleming, President, Smoky Mountains Hiking Club  
Brian Fitzgerald, Chair, ATC Stewardship Council  
Philip Royer, Chair, ATC SORO Regional Partnership Committee